

DAVID BOWIE

"GO TO ABBEY ROAD, MR X WILL TURN UP"



BON JOVI

JON BON JOVI: THE CLASSIC ROCK INTERVIEW



★ CLASSIC ★

Rock



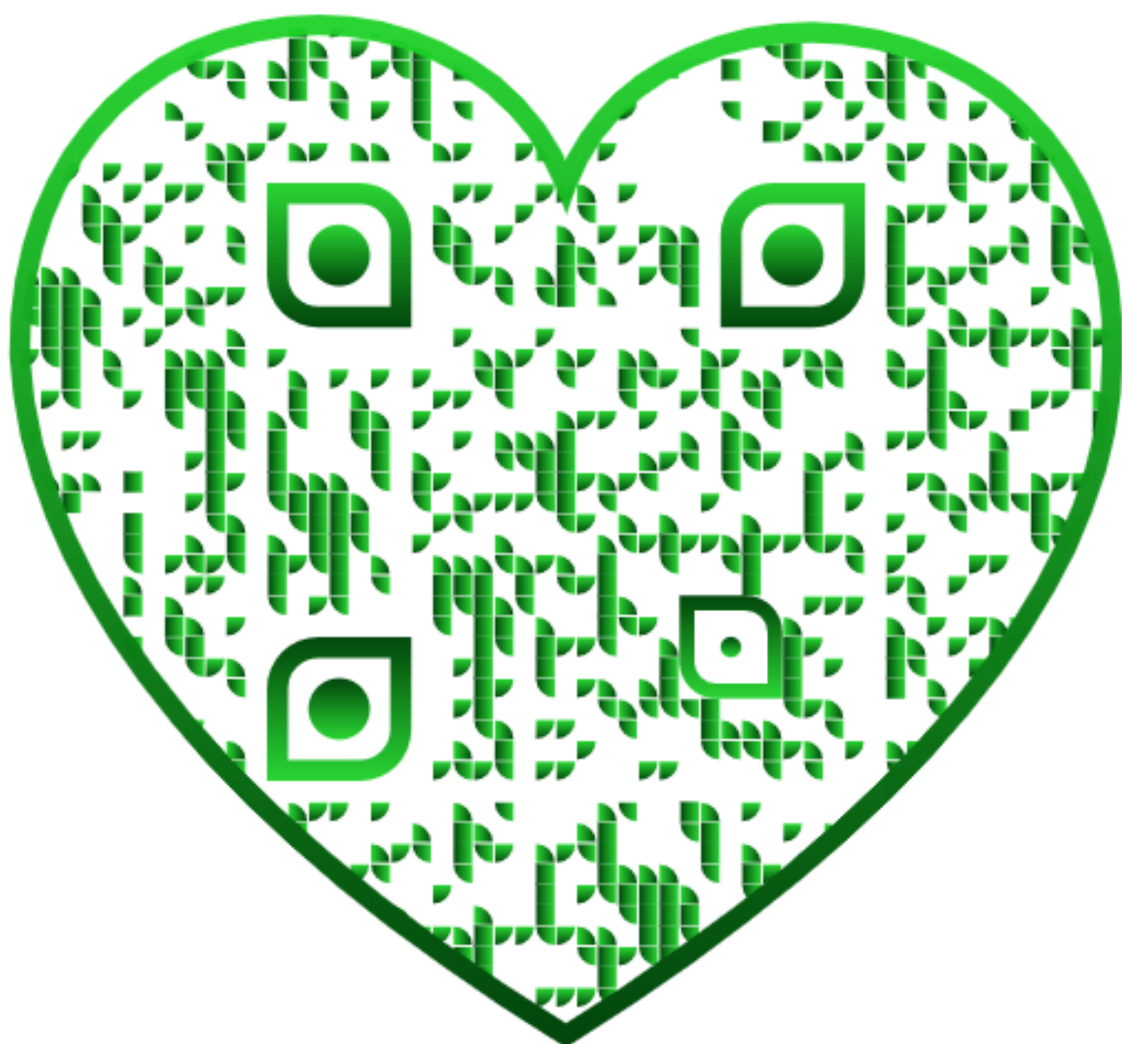
DIO WAS OUT, GILLAN WAS GONE, GEEZER HAD GIVEN UP.
AND OZZY? OZZY HAD DECLARED WAR

BLACK SABBATH

FUTURE
ISSUE 328

THE UNTOLD STORY OF AN UNLIKELY RESURRECTION

BY TONY IOMMI, TONY MARTIN & MORE



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Black Sabbath

"We broke up, came back together, threw somebody out and got them back in again..."



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Contributing writers

John Aizlewood, Merlin Alderslade, Marcel Anders, Stuart Bailie, Geoff Barton, Tim Batcup, Mark Blake, Mark Beaumont, Max Bell, Essi Berelian, Paul Brannigan, Alex Burrows, Pat Carty, Rich Chamberlain, Stephen Dalton, Bill DeMain, Niall Doherty, Lee Dorrian, Mark Ellen, Claudia Elliott, Paul Elliott, Dave Everley, Jerry Ewing, Hugh Fielder, Eleanor Goodman, Gary Graff, Nick Hasted, Rich Hobson, Barney Hoskyns, Jon Hotten, Rob Hughes, Neil Jeffries, Emma Johnston, Damian Jones, Jo Kendall, Hannah May Kilroy, Dom Lawson, Dannii Leivers, Chris Lord, Ken McIntyre, James McNair, Lee Marlow, Julian Marszalek, Alexander Milas, Paul Moody, Grant Moon, Kris Needs, Paul Rees, Chris Roberts, David Quantick, Will Simpson, Johnny Sharp, David Sinclair, Sleazegrinder, David Stubbs, Everett True, Jaan Uhelszki, Mick Wall, Philip Wilding, Henry Yates

Contributing photographers

Brian Aris, Dick Barnatt, Ami Barwell, Rob Blackham, Adrian Boot, Justin Borucki, Dave Brolan, Alison Clarke, Zach Cordner, Fin Costello, Henry Diltz, Kevin Estrada, James Fortune, Jill Furmanovsky, Herb Greene, Bob Gruen, Michael Halsband, Ross Halfin, Paul Harries, Mick Hutson, Will Ireland, Robert Knight, Marie Korner, Barry Levine, Jim Marshall, John McMurtrie, Gered Mankowitz, David Montgomery, Kevin Nixon, Denis O'Regan, Katja Ogrin, Barry Plummer, Ron Pownall, Neal Preston, Michael Putland, Mick Rock, James Sharrock, Pennie Smith, Stephen Stickler, Leigh A van der Byl, Chris Walter, Mark Weiss, Barrie Wentzell, Baron Wolman, Michael Zagaris, Neil Zlozower

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Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA

Editorial

Editor **Siân Llewellyn**
Art Editor **Darrell Mayhew**
Deputy Editor **Polly Glass**
Production Editor **Paul Henderson**
Reviews Editor **Ian Fortnam**
News/Lives Editor **Dave Ling**
Online Editor **Fraser Lewry**
Content Director (Music) **Scott Rowley**
Head Of Design (Music) **Brad Merrett**

Advertising

Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising Sales Director (Music Portfolio) **Lara Jaggon**
lara.jaggon@futurenet.com
Account Director **Kyle Phillips**
kyle.phillips@futurenet.com
Account Director **Steven Pyatt**
steven.pyatt@futurenet.com
Account Manager **Lawrence Cooke**
lawrence.cooke@futurenet.com

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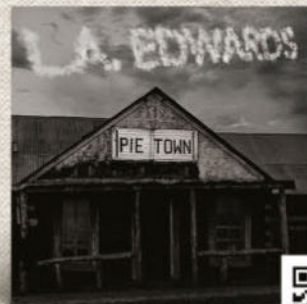
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When you stop and think about it, it's amazing how many line-up permutations Black Sabbath have been through in their illustrious, storied career. Of course,

I'd wager that whenever Black Sabbath are mentioned, we all immediately think of the classic quartet of Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward. But what of the Dio era? And what about that time that Ian Gillan stepped up to the mic? Or Glenn Hughes? Or when Geezer left? Or Bill... Or, most pertinently this issue, the time(s) that vocalist Tony Martin took the vocal spot. The 1980s were a fractious, crazy time in the Sabbath story, and this issue we talked to Tonys Iommi and Martin all about it (p26).

Elsewhere, Jon Bon Jovi opens up in the Classic Rock Interview (p36), we remember Allman Brother Dickey Betts (p10), celebrate 50 years of Praying Mantis (p66) and 40 years of FM (p62), and so much more. Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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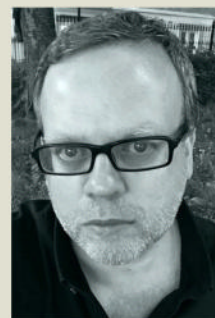
DAVE LING

Ever since he first got wind of the box set now known as *Anno Domini 1989-1995*, *Classic Rock* co-founder Dave has been a loud and persistent cheerleader for a reassessment of Black Sabbath's underrated Tony Martin-fronted era. With this month's cover story (p26), he finally got his wish. Dave also got to send Praying Mantis (p66) a 50th-anniversary birthday cake! Don't eat it all, Tino...



IAN FORTNAM

It was the allure of Ayshea Brough that took *CR*'s future Reviews Ed to *Lift Off With Ayshea* in June 1972. Ollie Beak co-presented, but Fortnam was over owls by then. Anyway, that's where he first saw David Bowie, performing *Starman*. "This is better than Chicory Tip," he thought, a first impression that he still staunchly defends. This issue, Ian considers Bowie's *Absolute Beginners* (p22), and goes toe-to-toe with Cock Sparrer (p58).



PAUL BRANNIGAN

Having persuaded his sister to buy *Slippery When Wet* upon its release in 1986, Paul has been singing along tunelessly to Bon Jovi classics for almost four decades, but never had the chance to interview JBJ until now (p36). Paul was excited to ask about Bon Jovi's infamous 'lost weekend', as detailed in former bodyguard Danny Francis's excellent *Star Man* memoir, but JBJ insists he wasn't there, asking: "Listen, officer, you got proof?" Hmm...



The Wildhearts 2024:
(l-r) Ginger, Ben Marsden,
Maggie (seated), Jon Poole,
Pontus Snibb.

ANDY LEAHY/REXUS

CALL OF THE WILD

Two years on from their less than amicable split, **The Wildhearts** are back, re-energised with a reconfigured line-up, and gigs being announced soon.

Ever-present Wildhearts frontman Ginger, who co-founded the band back in 1989, recently recorded an as yet untitled eleventh Wildhearts studio album with bassist Jon Poole, guitarist Ben Marsden and drummer Pontus Snibb, and the four-piece are currently gearing up for a post-hiatus show at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire on June 6, with soon-to-be-announced tour dates to follow this autumn and winter.

When *Classic Rock* catches up with them – and Ginger's friendly collie Maggie – during a break from rehearsals in the Glasgow studio owned by local guys Gun, they're in very fine fettle.

"It's all great," Ginger enthuses. "We're all friends anyway, so it's a lot of fun. This is the third day we've been here, and we've just laughed every night. You go to bed with the sound of everybody laughing downstairs, and it's a fucking beautiful thing."

Former Cardiacs mainstay Poole has enjoyed three previous stints in The

Wildhearts, and he's glad to be back. Marsden and Snibb are new members.

"We've lost our Wildhearts virginity!" beams Marsden, formerly of Grand Theft Auto and the youngest member of the current line-up.

"It's a privilege," adds Snibb, who's on loan from his day job as frontman with Swedish hard rockers Bonafide. "We get to play Ginger's fantastic songs."

The new album, which is set for an autumn 2024 release, was recorded at Treehouse Studios in Derbyshire with producer Jim Pinder, who has previously worked with Sleep Token, Bring Me The Horizon and Bullet For My Valentine, among others. He also produced The Wildhearts 2019 album *Renaissance Men*.

"He's a Wildhearts fan," says Ginger, "so he knew exactly what we wanted without us having to try and explain it to him. And it's everything that Wildhearts fans want, really. There's loads of variety, loads of riffs, loads of big choruses, there's lots of melody, some unexpected parts... It's just a collection of really, really strong songs with strong performances. I think everyone's going to be surprised and delighted by it."

Poole concurs: "It ticks a lot of boxes, but at the same time it feels really fresh. We're not repeating ourselves.

I think it's fair to say that it's quite from the heart – Ginger's stuff always is. They're personal songs, and you get that feeling from it."

Ginger has always been commendably open about his mental health struggles. Last year he was sectioned and placed on suicide watch. Thankfully he came through, and his latest batch of songs reflect that.

"The album is very rejoicing," he says. "It's forward thinking, it's very positive and celebratory. It kind of starts with feeling resigned to this life, a life of mental illness and all that sort of stuff, but it takes you on this journey, and by the end of it we're saying: good times, bad times, they happen to

everyone, it's important to connect. We're all human, we're all experiencing things. They're the sort of subjects that'll touch everyone."

That comforting spirit of connection has always been a huge part of The Wildhearts' appeal. It's an extended fan/family affair.

"They're always there for each other," says Ginger. "The most important thing about the community is when the band's not playing, when they haven't got the music on, they're still there, they still help each other out financially, emotionally, mentally. It's a very healthy family to belong to, and that for me has always been as important as the music. When they're singing the words back, it doesn't matter how tired you are, how jaded – y'know, this is just another show of many – as soon as they start singing it just puts you back into that place you want to be. For us and them, it's a sharing experience. They're a very special bunch."

Ginger expounds on the subject of his devoted fan-base when gently pressed, as it's clearly very important to him. It explains why he's kept The Wildhearts going for all these years.

"They've helped me a lot," he says, "and apparently the music helps them. If you're trying to better yourself all the time, then your opinion of life changes, there is always something inspirational to feed from the older you get. I also feel like it's a position of service, because you know that people are really looking forward to the music. But beyond that it's the community, it's bigger than us, it's bigger than the music."

So what can we expect from the forthcoming live shows? "Lots of pyro," Ginger says, smiling. "I'm a pyro fanatic. I've always wanted a bigger stage show, and we're going to reinvest in it this time. It'll be a visual treat."

And the set-list? The Wildhearts have a vast back catalogue to cherry-pick from.

"You've got to play the fan-favourites," says Ginger, "but I want to showcase this band's musicality, so we've included some of the longer songs we've never played before. But really the whole thing is geared towards everyone being entertained within an inch of their life." **PW**

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DICKEY BETTS

December 12, 1943 – April 18, 2024

Dave Ling looks back at the life and music of one of the co-founders of the Allman Brothers Band, one of the pioneers in bringing southern rock to the masses.

Dickey Betts, a co-founder of the Allman Brothers Band and one of the most influential and colourful figures in the realm of music known loosely as southern rock, has died following a period of declining health. His passing at 80 years old leaves just co-drummer Jai Johanny Johanson, aka Jaimo, as the last surviving member of the original line-up of the group.

A statement on behalf of the band recalled how Betts's "extraordinary" guitar playing, alongside that of Duane Allman, "created a unique dual-guitar sound that became the signature sound". Until that point it had been traditional for two-guitar bands to have defined roles for soloists and rhythm players.

The statement remembers Betts as being "passionate in life, be it music, songwriting, fishing, hunting, boating, golf, karate or boxing", adding: "Dickey was all-in on and excelled at anything that caught his attention."

It concluded: "Betts joins his brothers, Duane Allman, Berry Oakley, Butch Trucks and Gregg Allman, as well as ABB crew members Twiggs Lyndon, Joe Dan Petty, Red Dog, Kim Payne and Mike Callahan in that old Winnebago in the sky touring the world, taking their music to all who will listen."

The Allman Brothers Band formed in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1969, their free-form style fusing together elements of country, rock, blues and jazz. While brothers Duane (guitar) and Gregg Allman (keyboards, vocals) were the band's leaders, Betts was a significant member, writing many of the band's quintessential songs including *Blue Sky* and *Ramblin' Man*, and also the instrumentals *In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed* and *Jessica*, the latter of which became the theme tune to the British TV show *Top Gear*.

On stage and in the studio, the band became known for their improvisational skills. Their tune *Mountain Jam* (based on the 1967 Donovan song *There Is a Mountain*), which appeared on 1972's part-live double album *Eat A Peach*, would serve as an extended instrumental jamming vehicle for the Allman Brothers Band throughout their long and distinguished history.

Also recognised for his unpredictable, hellraising rock-star behaviour, Betts was the inspiration for the character played by

Billy Crudup in the 2000 film *Almost Famous*. During Betts's youth, trashed hotel rooms, arrests and fights with band members and authority figures were just a little too commonplace.

Forrest Richard Betts was born in West Palm Beach, Florida. At five years old he played the ukelele, and progressed to performing in several local bands before meeting future ABB member bassist Berry Oakley III and forming the group Second Coming. After the pair jammed with Duane Allman, Duane invited them to team up together.

With his connection to Eric Clapton, Duane brought pedigree to the Allman Brothers Band, although the ex-session star admitted: "I'm the famous guitar player, but Dickey is the good one."

When Duane died in a motorcycle crash in October 1971, with the group poised for a commercial breakthrough via their double-live set *At Fillmore East*, Betts stepped up to take a bigger role.

When just a year later Berry Oakley died in remarkably similar circumstances, crashing his motorbike into a bus just three blocks from where Duane had been killed, a lesser band would have combusted. But somehow the Allmans continued to reinvent themselves, with Betts acting as unofficial leader for their fourth album, 1973's *Brothers And Sisters*.

Although the ABB became superstars, drug usage began to spiral, and the band members grew apart. When Gregg Allman reluctantly testified against his personal road manager John 'Scooter' Herring in a 1976 federal drugs case, the Brothers were torn asunder. After a split in 1976, Betts released a solo album, *Highway Call*, before forming Dickey Betts & Great Southern.

A reunion ensued for the Allmans' 1979 album *Enlightened Rogues*, but despite selling half a million copies the spark was missing, and three years later, having misfired with *Reach For The Sky* and *Brothers Of The Road*, the band broke up again.

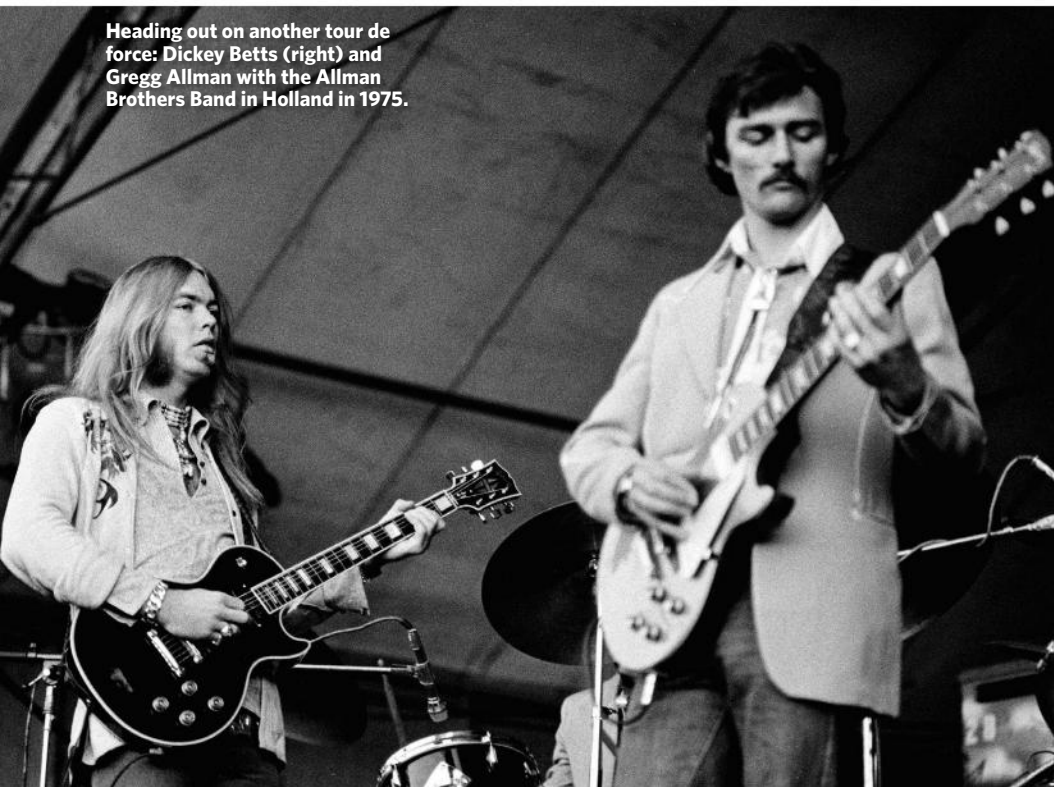
In 1989 a new line-up celebrated ABB's twentieth anniversary, with guitarist Warren Haynes, previously of Dickey Betts's solo group, helping them to rediscover their form with the back-to-basics, Tom Dowd-produced 1990 album *Seven Turns*.

"I wound up spending twenty-five years of my life as ➤

|||||
**"Dickey was all-in
on and excelled at
anything that caught
his attention."**

Allman Brothers Band statement





Heading out on another tour de force: Dickey Betts (right) and Gregg Allman with the Allman Brothers Band in Holland in 1975.

“Calling us [Southern rock] pigeonholed us, forcing people to expect certain types of music from us that I don’t think are fair.” Dickey Betts

a member of my favourite band,” Haynes stated, as the terrible news of Betts’s death broke. “It did not take long to realise, standing next to Dickie with that beautiful tone, that I had a lot to work to do on both with my tone and with my style. He threw me in the lake and I had to learn to swim. I’m forever grateful for that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

With Gregg Allman and Betts at loggerheads, for what was described as “personal reasons” – the band had insisted that Dickey go into rehab – he was suspended prior to a tour in 1990. The move was meant to be temporary. “Ain’t no way we can fire Dickey,” founding member Butch Trucks said at the time. However, the first of several police reports for claims by his long-suffering wife Donna of domestic assault muddled the waters. Betts insists he was sacked for demanding an audit of the band’s money from the band’s management.

“[Dickey] was just crazy as a bat, y’know,” Gregg Allman explained at the time. “But the main thing is that it wasn’t working musically any more.”

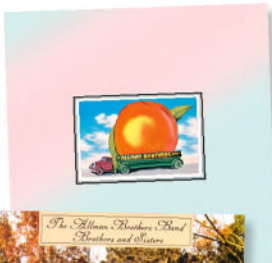
After Betts filed a lawsuit, there was little realistic chance of him making a return to the Allman Brothers, so he resumed a solo career. In later years his son Duane (named after Duane Allman) joined him on lead guitar in Dickey Betts & Great Southern.

Betts and Gregg Allman reconciled before the latter’s death in 2017. Betts’s daughter Christie is married to Tesla guitarist Frank Hannon. A road dog to the end, Betts remained on the road even after brain surgery as a result of a fall at his Florida home in what was described as a “freak accident”. He also suffered a minor stroke.

Betts was inducted to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame with the rest of the Allman Brothers Band in 1995. Still without him, the group wrapped their career in October 2014 upon completion of what had become an annual run of shows at New York’s Beacon Theatre. They continue to be hailed as an influence by Lynyrd Skynyrd, ZZ Top, The Black Crowes and Kid Rock, among others

Despite having become poster boys for the genre, Betts “hated” the label ‘southern rock’, commenting: “I think it’s limiting. I’d rather just be known as a progressive rock band from the South. Calling us that pigeonholed us, forcing people to expect certain types of music from us that I don’t think are fair.”

In 2020, Betts was name-checked in Bob Dylan’s song *Murder Most Foul*, which included the line: ‘Play Oscar Peterson, play Stan Getz, play Blue Sky, play Dickey Betts’. While Betts was thrilled by that, he was modest enough to say: “Well, he [Dylan] just used me because [my name] rhymes with Getz.”



A FAREWELL TO THE RAMBLIN’ MAN

“My first concert was Dickey Betts at Coleman’s in Rome, New York in 1983. Blew my mind and made me want a Les Paul. My thoughts and prayers go out to Duane and the entire Betts family.”

Joe Bonamassa

“Gonna miss ol’ Dickey – the wrong side of sunrise ‘n’ all. Bon voyage ol’ pal.”

Bob Weir, Grateful Dead

“I have some fantastic memories. Dickey, Duane and I were like a ‘59 Les Paul club. At Fillmore East is one of the best albums ever.”

Randy Bachman, Bachman-Turner Overdrive

“Dickey’s contribution to music is massive, he’ll live on as his songs are learned and played by generations to come. We’re grateful to have gotten to spend a little time with him over the years. Thanks for showing us the way.”

Blackberry Smoke

“Before achieving incredible success, Dickey was a man that stood strong by himself. His God-given strength would not allow for failure in music or in life.”

Doug Gray, The Marshall Tucker Band

“Dickey and the Brothers were big influences on not only us as individual musicians but as a band collectively. Fly high Ramblin’ Man.”

Whiskey Myers

“Combining jazz, rock, country and blues, Dickey Betts along with Toy Caldwell [The Marshall Tucker Band] and a handful of others were the ‘southern squires’ of southern rock lead guitar”

Richard Young, The Kentucky Headhunters

“What a true master of expression-filled soloing Dickey was. I was glued to my Allman Brothers albums back in the day, and still listen to them today”

Dave Meniketti, Y&T

“Dickey and Duane rewrote the rules for how two rock guitarists can work together, completely scrapping the traditional rhythm/lead roles to stand toe to toe.”

Michael Wilton, Queensrÿche

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RIP

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CJ Snare

December 14, 1959 – April 5, 2024

The melodic hard rock community mourns the shock passing of CJ Snare, frontman with American veterans FireHouse. Snare sang on all of the group's five US Top 40 hits, including *Don't Treat Me Bad*, *Love Of A Lifetime* and *When I Look Into Your Eyes*. The 64-year-old had undergone surgery for colon cancer and was planning to return for the band's summer shows.

"This is so sad," said Kip Winger. "CJ was one of the most kind-hearted beautiful people I ever met."

Brian Bethell

November 18, 1949 – April 3, 2024

Nine Below Zero guitarist/vocalist Dennis Greaves has led the tributes to Brian Bethell, bassist with UK blues-rockers. His death was announced by Greaves, who said: "Brian will be greatly missed by us all for his humour, and his Turkish suit he bought from the wedding shop in Bremen, also of course his fine musicianship. My regret is that he won't finish his memoirs."

Max Werner

December 29, 1953 – April 9, 2024

Max Werner was a co-founder of the Dutch progressive rocker band Kayak, starting out as their singer and Mellotron player before moving to the drums. He also recorded four solo albums. Having left Kayak in 1982, he returned for a further year in 1999. Werner was 70 years old when he died of as yet unreported cause.

Chan Romero,

July 7, 1941 – April 2024

Rock'n'roll performer Robert Lee 'Chan' Romero was best known as the writer of his 1959 hit *Hippy Hippy Shake*, recorded by The Beatles, the Swinging Blue Jeans, Mud, The Georgia Satellites and many more. Singer and guitarist Romero, from Billings, Montana, was 17 when he wrote the song. He was living in California at the time of his death at the age of 82.

Larry Page

November 9, 1936 – April 19, 2024

Born Leonard Davies in Hayes, Middlesex, Larry Page was a pop singer in the 1950s, before becoming a manager, record producer and label executive. Page produced dozens of hits, including the iconic *Wild Thing* by The Troggs. According to legend, The Troggs knocked off the track in 15 minutes at the end of a session. Page was 80 years old.

Eddie Sutton

Died April 19, 2024

The singer with NY hardcore crew Leeway succumbed to lung cancer. He was 59.

Jerry Abbott

April 8, 1942 –

April 2, 2024

The father of Pantera's Dimebag Darrell and Vinnie Paul was also a successful country music songwriter.

Rocket Norton

Died April 5, 2024

Born Gary Wanstall, Norton was the drummer with Canadian hard rockers Prism. He was 73.

Keith LeBlanc

November 10, 1954 –

April 4, 2024

The drummer with Tackhead and Little Axe was 69 years old.



Clarence 'Frogman' Henry

March 19, 1937 –

April 7, 2024

American R&B singer and pianist Henry (pictured) was 87 when he died from complications following surgery.

Marty Hill

Died April 24, 2024

Hill, guitarist with US southern rockers Preacher Stone, is the second member the band have lost in the past six months.

Jon Card

December 11, 1960 –

April 8, 2024

The drummer with DOA, SNFU and the Subhumans was 63 when he died.

Graeme Naysmith

Died April 4, 2024

Naysmith was the guitarist with British alt-rockers Pale Saints. He was 57 years old.

Gavin Webb

Died April 16, 2024

Aussie band The Masters Apprentices' bassist died of cancer. He was 77.



Mike Pinder

December 27, 1941 – April 24, 2024

Mike Pinder, the last surviving founding member of The Moody Blues, has died at the age of 82. The keyboard player had been suffering from dementia for several years.

A statement from his family revealed that Pinder passed "peacefully" and that his final days were "filled with music, encircled by the love of his family. Michael lived his life with a childlike wonder, walking a deeply introspective path which fused the mind and the heart."

Pinder helped form British band The Moody Blues in 1964 and they had an initial hit with *Go Now*. But it wasn't until 1967, by which time Justin Hayward and John Lodge had replaced guitarist Denny Laine and bassist Clint Warwick respectively, that the band began to rise in popularity, shifting their sound from their early R&B roots to a more progressive and symphonic sound with second album *Days Of Future Passed*, released in 1967.

Birmingham-born Pinder had moved to California during the band's mid-70s hiatus. When the band reconvened in 1977 to begin work on the album *Octave*, he declined full participation, and was replaced by former Yes keyboard player Patrick Moraz.

Pinder released his debut solo album, *The Promise*, in 1976. A second solo album, *Among The Stars*, followed in 1994, and *A Planet With One Mind* a year later.

Away from music Pinder worked as a consultant to the Atari Corporation.

Happy to stay out of the limelight, Pinder was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame as a member of The Moody

Blues in 2018, although he was the only member of the band not to give an acceptance speech. Afterwards he said: "Many MB fans have asked why I did not speak at the induction, but by the time the Moodies took the stage we were five hours into the ceremony. The oldest of the inductees were up the latest. The speeches were a bit anti-climactic at that point, and it was only fitting that the current touring members [Graeme Edge, Hayward and Lodge] spoke first. I am happy that we finally got inducted, for our fans' sake. As I have said for the last thirty years, 'the fans are my hall of fame'."

As well as the music he created with The Moody Blues and solo, Pinder will best be remembered as an advocate of technology, notably his early pioneering work with the Mellotron.

His passing means that no original members of The Moody Blues are still alive. Drummer Edge died in 2021, vocalist and flautist Ray Thomas in 2018, and guitarist Denny Laine lost a battle with interstitial lung disease last year. Bassist Clint Warwick died in 2004.

Pinder's former Moody Blues colleague John Lodge said: "All the love possible goes out from the Lodge family to Mike's family today." Lead singer Justin Hayward commented: "Mike was a natural-born musician who could play any style of music with warmth and love. His re-imagining and rebuilding (literally) of the Mellotron gave us our identifiable early sound. He was a huge part of my own musical journey. My sincere condolences to his loving and devoted family." **JE**



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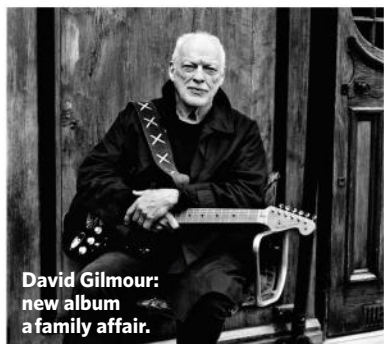
Ozzy O and Peter Frampton also among 2024 intake.

Foreigner, Ozzy Osbourne and Peter Frampton are among the names to be inducted to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame later this year.

"This is something I never expected," Frampton responded. "I am overwhelmed. I can't thank everyone enough for voting for me. You are the best."

Of Foreigner's induction, band leader and guitarist Mick Jones said: "Membership in the home of my peers is a priceless highlight of my career." He added that the awards ceremony, on October 19, would be "an emotional day" for him and the surviving members vocalist Lou Gramm, keyboard player Al Greenwood, bassist Rick Wills and drummer Dennis Elliott, and "a very special moment" for the families of former members Ian McDonald and Ed Gagliardi, who passed away in 2022 and 2014 respectively.

Ozzy, who was inducted as a member of Black Sabbath in 2006, says he "feels big" and that he's "more than honoured" by the validation as a solo artist. **FL/DL**



David Gilmour:
new album
a family affair.

David Gilmour Gets Lucky

Former Pink Floyd guitarist reveals new solo album.

David Gilmour is to release his first album of new material in nine years. The former Pink Floyd guitarist/vocalist's *Luck And Strange* is released on September 6 via Sony Music.

As well as the surprise inclusion of playing by the late Pink Floyd keyboard player Richard Wright, which dates back to a 2007 jam at Gilmour's house, the album also has contributions from Gilmour's daughter Romany and son Gabriel, long-time collaborator Guy Pratt on bass and legendary drummer Steve Gadd. Gilmour's wife Polly Samson once again contributes lyrics.

Meanwhile, *The Great Gig In The Sky*, a track on Floyd's album *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, is central to a new immersive exhibition that takes place at in London's Marble Arch on Friday and Saturday evenings in June. For details visit frameless.com/brainstorms. **JE/DL**



NEWS

James Hetfield has a new tattoo on his middle finger, created using ink mixed with some of Lemmy's ashes. According to the Metallica frontman, it means the late Motörhead frontman can "still fly the bird at the world".

The Smashing Pumpkins sifted through 10,000 applications before appointing Kiki Wong, as their new guitarist. Wong, previously with LA rockers Vigil Of War, will be with the Chicago alt.rock band on their UK tour in June.

Sebastian Bach has once again voiced hope of a reunion with his former band Skid Row, who recently parted with singer Erik Grönwall. Dismissing the "whole narrative that we don't get along", Bach believes that all issues between both parties are "one hundred percent a business thing".

Aerosmith are set to return to the road in September, as their Peace Out Farewell Tour resumes almost exactly a year after being abandoned due to problems with Steven Tyler's voice. The tour is scheduled to run until February 26 next year. UK dates are yet to be confirmed.



Robert Plant (pictured) is strongly rumoured to be working on a new version of a Led Zeppelin classic, if now deleted social media posts are to be believed. While Plant remains tight-lipped, one of his collaborators divulged: "The project is currently top secret, [but] it involves a Led Zeppelin song."



WELCOME BACK

Collective Soul

They recorded their new album in Elvis's old house, and got spooky signs that his late daughter disapproved.

Although they emerged during the grunge era, Atlanta's Collective Soul have always been a hard band to pin down style-wise. Mixing big riffs and heart-on-sleeve vocals with sweet pop melodies, they're probably the only band to have supported both Van Halen and The Cranberries. Huge in the States but still virtually unknown in Europe, they celebrate their 30th anniversary this year with a new album, *Here To Eternity*, that, as frontman Ed Roland explains, was touched by a ghostly (and regal) presence.

What has enabled the band to stay together for more than thirty years?

We all grew up together in the same town, same street even. We know when to hug each other and when to pop each other in the face and nobody takes offence.

Why did the band never really break big in the UK?

I wish I knew. It's not for lack of trying or for not wanting it – I'd like everybody to love us. Isn't that why you get on stage in the first place? It's bad luck, I think.

The new album was recorded in Elvis's former house. How did you wangle that?

Everybody knows about Graceland, but Elvis also owned a home in Palm Springs, and about ten years ago I met the guys who'd bought it. Nothing much had changed other than they took the furniture out. RCA [Records] had acoustically treated it and he'd recorded his last few records there. So I asked them: "Can we spend a month recording there?" Luckily they said yes. I came prepared with ten songs, we set the studio up, and in four days we had the record.

Did you feel his presence?

I slept in Elvis's room, our engineer had

Priscilla's, and Lisa Marie's was where we set the control room up. And while we were out there she died. The night she passed, the ceiling fell in her bedroom. There was, whatever you want to call it, spirits flowing! It wasn't rotten or anything, it just fell in. That spooked us. We were like: "Maybe she's not liking what we're doing."

On the album there's a track titled Bob Dylan (Where Are You Today?). What's the idea behind that?

Over here in the States there's a lot of division going on. Bob Dylan is one of my favourite songwriters, and he had this knack of bringing awareness to things without actually taking a side. I feel we need a little bit of that. We're acting like a bunch of idiots right now. If we could

just listen without judging immediately, then I think everyone would get along a lot better.

Collective Soul played Woodstock in both 1994 and 1999. What are your memories from each one?

The 1994 one was awesome. It was done in the right spirit, there were no egos. 1999 was this corporate event where everybody was trying to outdo each other. We did our gig and got out just in time, cos we knew what was going down.

You're doing a US tour with Hootie And The Blowfish this summer, but when are you coming to Europe?

We've been asking that for decades – we haven't played there for at least twenty years. I bring it up all the time with the business people. Honestly, I'd play coffee shops. Maybe I need to start twisting their arm a little harder. **WS**

Here To Eternity is out now via Fuzzie-Flex Records.

“Our tour bus caught fire – we lost everything: all of our guitars, merch, equipment...”



★ HIGH HOPES

Shane Smith & The Saints

When the going got tough, the Texans kept going, and are now reaping some rewards.

The Blue Norther is a fast-moving cold front that becomes a tempest when it hits Texas. The storm is marked by violent changes in temperature. “It’s a really powerful thing to witness and feel,” says singer, songwriter and Lone Star native Shane Smith. “You see this whole weather wall coming, and then it’s like, ‘boom!’ It’s scary, but there’s also something really romantic to it at the same time.”

Norther is a fitting title for Shane Smith & The Saints’ fourth album. Not only does it signify the Austin, Texas quintet’s eruptive, inclement mix of red dirt country, folk, bluegrass and embattled rock, it also serves as a metaphor for their difficult journey over the past decade or so.

“It’s that combination of massive energy building and building, then finally releasing and getting to this place we’re at now,” Smith explains. “We’ve been doing this for so long, but it feels like this is the first time we’ve ever been *heard*. So calling it *Norther* makes perfect sense.”

Indeed, the band’s story is testament to both talent and sheer durability. In 2019, following an appalling run of ill fortune after third album *Hail Mary*, they almost quit altogether.

“We’d been audited by the IRS,” says Smith, “then we discovered a crew member had been slowly stealing around

\$25,000 from me, with a credit card. And our tour bus caught fire as we were travelling to Lubbock. Long story short, we lost everything: all of our guitars, merch and equipment, which had taken us for ever to build up. I was like: ‘Man, I think I’m done. I don’t see us bouncing back from this.’”

Instead they resolved to dig in harder. The turning point came in 2021, after the band’s *All I See Is You* gave its name to an episode of popular TV Western drama *Yellowstone*, and they performed in a lengthy scene, since when they’ve made numerous appearances in the series.

“That suddenly gave everyone a reason to talk about us,” Smith adds. “All those fans who’d followed us for ever were out there spreading the gospel: ‘I told you this band is really good!’ So it turned around and hasn’t slowed down since.”

The band – Smith (acoustic guitar/lead vocals), Bennett Brown (fiddle), Dustin Schaefer (lead guitar), Chase Satterwhite (bass) and Zach Stover (drums) – have recently hit a number of landmarks, including selling out Red Rocks in a day, playing the Grand Ole Opry, and making their US TV network debut. It feels like a deserved pay-off after all the dog days. “Oh man, it’s been crazy,” says Smith. “But going for so long without any success hard-wires your brain to never get too excited about things. We still feel that same sense of restlessness. And there’s definitely something to that. The message is if you can work harder than anyone else, eventually you’ll get there.” **RH**

Norther is out now via *Thirty Tigers/Geronimo West Records*.



“Turnpike Troubadours influenced us very early on,” says Smith, “but we’re all collectively massive fans of Whiskey Myers. They’re role models and really dear friends who took us on tour when no one else ever would. Even in high school, me and Chase, our bassist, would be playing their music. So they’ve always been important to me.”



DSCHINN

Dschinn, Bacillus Records, Germany, 1972. £300.



German band The Dischas were active during the 60s, when they released three pop/rock 45s. As the 70s approached, they adopted a heavier, more progressive

blues-rock sound, and changed their name to Dschinn.

Dschinn's self-titled 1972 album is a good, solid example of German hard rock of the time. Heavy, bluesy riffs and lively rhythms are topped off by the raspy vocal style of Peter Lorenz, which characterises the band's signature sound, and the lyrics are sung in English.

Unlike a lot of similar albums of the era, which tend to go off in many directions, *Dschinn* follows a pretty distinctive 'no-frills' hard rock approach from beginning to end. Some of the more successful moments include the dynamic, contrasting mellow/heavy atmospherics of *Fortune*, which also has a more relaxed vocal approach than the rest of the album.

'A good, solid example of German hard rock of the time.'

I Wanna Know is an all-out heavy rocker with Sabbathian vibes and pounding drums. *Train* is an upbeat groover with vibrant harmonica blasts and sharp lead guitar breaks. *Smile Of The Devil* is a more chilled-out affair musically, with Lorenz's raspy vocals reciting a sorrowful tale.

The album closes with an interesting take on the Yardbirds classic *For Your Love*, which somehow works despite its heavier rock approach and accented vocals. The stunning Dali-esque sleeve art certainly adds to the album's collectability.

In an era when so many great records were being released in Germany, *Dschinn* is certainly one of the good ones, if perhaps not an all-out classic. **LD**

Mike Peters has revealed that his cancer, which had been in remission, has returned. The terrible news forced the frontman with Welsh rockers The Alarm to cancel a US tour. "I'm hoping and praying with all that I have that this is just a pause in the story of my life, and that normal service will be able to resume soon," he says.

Orange Goblin return with their first album in six years. Recorded with Mike Exeter, of Tony Iommi and Judas Priest fame, *Science, Not Fiction* is released on July 19 via Peaceville Records.

In a move that further backtracks on their so-called 2015 'retirement', **Mötley Crüe** have signed a new deal with Big Machine Records to release a new single, *Dogs Of War*, nine years after their supposed farewell single *All Bad Things Must End*. The Crüe also long-since reneged on their agreement to cease touring.



Iggy Pop and **Siouxsie Sioux** (pictured) have teamed up for a new version of Iggy's song *The Passenger*. The collaboration, made for an advert to promote Magnum ice cream, is Sioux's first new recording in nine years.

Geoffrey Downes has a new line-up of **Asia**. Joining the co-founding keyboard player are vocalist/bassist Harry Whitley, guitarist John Mitchell (Lonely Robot, It Bites and more) and Planet X drummer Virgil Donati. The rebooted band will play US dates this summer.



WELCOME BACK P.O.D.

They were way ahead of the nu-metal curve, but reckon they still don't get the respect they deserve.

When P.O.D. formed in San Diego in 1992, the term 'nu metal' wasn't yet even a whisper in the metal world. Nonetheless, the band's mixture of hip-hop, punk and metal made them forerunners in a scene that would dominate the pop-culture landscape.

Despite the genre's fall from grace at the turn of the millennium, P.O.D. persevered. Their new album, *Veritas*, arrives six years after their previous one, 2008's *When Angels & Serpents Dance*, and even with the departure of drummer Wuv Bernardo after almost 30 years, vocalist Sonny Sandoval says the band are stronger than ever.

The gap between *Veritas* and its predecessor is the longest between albums in P.O.D.'s history. What was the hold up?

We were a little bit behind the eight ball because of covid. A lot of bands when they realised they couldn't tour were like: "Cool, let's write instead." But we're an old-school band, we sit together in a room and we write records.

What does *Veritas* say about who P.O.D. are in 2024?

You have to grow and change – that's a part of life. We're not these teenage kids writing in-your-face 'this is what I believe'-type songs. But the core will always be the same – P.O.D. comes from a place of gratefulness and of love. Our faith in God will never change.

P.O.D. have always embraced collaborations, and this album is no different. What do you get from working with other artists?

We were one of the first bands to line up multiple collaborations on an album, because we're hip-hop fans and that's what they would do. We've worked with

legends and new talent alike: HR from Bad Brains, Eek-A-Mouse!, Tatiana Shmayluk... the list goes on. It shows our diversity. We can play with the heaviest of bands, or work with a reggae legend.

Were you annoyed at being lumped in with nu metal, even though P.O.D. pre-date the genre?

We're among the pioneers in this game! Every time we do a record or play a show, we don't understand why we don't get the same respect as bands who came later.

People might think we've got these big songs, so it's all just money in the bank, but for some reason we missed that boat. Our friends are playing arenas and have money to burn, but here we are proving that you can do it.

"We can play with the heaviest of bands, or with a reggae legend."

How did it feel when the genre took off?

When we first started, people would look at it like: "They're heavy, but they're rapping. They must be like Body Count." Then the same thing happened with Rage Against The Machine. Then Limp Bizkit comes out and we're being compared to them. 'Nu metal' was just another name. Before that it was rap rock, or rapcore... We didn't care because we were just doing it. Now we embrace it; if someone says: "You're my favourite nu-metal band," I'm just happy to be their favourite [laughs].

Who's the most surprising P.O.D. fan you've ever met?

A bit like how people might assume we only like heavy music, it can go both ways. We got invited to play the Latin Grammys with Santana. As we're walking up to perform, Justin Timberlake had just given an award, and he sees us and starts singing *Alive*. We couldn't believe it, man! **RH**

Veritas is out on May 3 via Mascot.

Peter Hook & The Light

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BY JOY DIVISION & NEW ORDER LIVE
UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND TOUR 2024

THURSDAY 17TH
OCTOBER 2024
PARR HALL WARRINGTON

FRIDAY 1ST
NOVEMBER 2024
ST GEORGE'S HALL
BRADFORD

THURSDAY 7TH
NOVEMBER 2024
CHEESE & GRAIN FROME

FRIDAY 8TH
NOVEMBER 2024
TRAMSHED CARDIFF

PETERHOOKANDTHELIGHT.LIVE
THE GIG CARTEL IN WARRINGTON
WITH SPIDER TOURING

20 JUL IPSWICH
CORN EXCHANGE

27 JUL ULVERSTON
THE CORO

30 AUG WARRINGTON
PARR HALL

17 DEC SUNDERLAND
THE FIRE STATION

22 DEC WOLVERHAMPTON
THE WULFRUN

"CLASSIC ROCK IN
THE COMPANY OF
TWO ROCK LEGENDS
AND THEIR BAND!"



GUN

HOMBRES



✦ SPECIAL GUESTS

Kiraj Mac Bxarell

WED, DEC 4
THUR, DEC 5
FRI, DEC 6
SAT, DEC 7
SUN, DEC 8
TUE, DEC 10
WED, DEC 11

SCALA, LONDON
KK'S STEEL MILL, WOLVS'
ACADEMY 2, MANCHESTER
SWX, BRISTOL
THE BROOK, SOUTHAMPTON
BRUDENELL, LEEDS
WYLAM BREWERY, NEWCASTLE

HUGH CORNWELL

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR TOUR

NOVEMBER 2024

20 READING SUB 89
21 LEEDS OLD WOOLLEN
22 EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL
23 SUNDERLAND FIRE STATION

27 SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK
28 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
29 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
30 NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER

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WAY AND OFTEN WITH STRIKING RESULTS"

Very Special Guests



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TWIN GUITARS - CLASSIC ROCK



FEATURING SONGS FROM LIVE DATES II

21:09 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
23:09 LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION
24:09 SOUTHPORT ATKINSON
26:09 CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION
27:09 GLASGOW ORAN MOR
03:10 LEEDS BRUDENELL
04:10 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
05:10 BURY MET THEATRE

07:10 BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
09:10 LINCOLN DRILL
10:10 WALSALL ARENA
11:10 RUGBY BENN HALL
21:10 CARDIFF TRAMSHED
22:10 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
23:10 NEWBURY ARLINGTON ARTS
24:10 ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL

ASHCON 2024 WISHBONE ASH CONVENTION
CHESTER LIVE ROOMS - SATURDAY 21 SEP (MIDDAY)
TICKETS PURCHASED FOR ASHCON INCLUDE ENTRY TO EVENING SHOW

New Deep Purple Album Due In July

Titled *=1*, it's classic Purple, "without relying on nostalgia".

Deep Purple release their 23rd studio album on July 19 via EarMusic. The mysteriously titled *=1* is the group's first album with guitarist Simon McBride, who joined when Steve Morse left due to personal circumstances. The track *Portable Door* is available now on streaming platforms.

"Deep Purple are more than just their members," said an announcement of the album. "*=1* embodies the essence and attitude of their 1970s incarnation possibly more than any other album in recent memory. With the legendary Bob Ezrin once again producing, the record evokes the pioneering band's classic sound, without relying on nostalgia."

It will be available in numerous formats, including CD, multiple types of vinyl, limited CD+DVD digipak and digital. Track titles include *Show Me*, *A Bit On The Side*, *Sharp Shooter*, *Old-Fangled Thing*, *If I Were You*, *Pictures Of You* and *Lazy Sod*.

Purple will play a five-date UK tour in November, with support from Reef. Before that they team up with Yes for North American dates in the summer. **FL/DL**



Deep Purple: a return to their classic sound.

Steve Dawson Jailed

Ex-Saxon bassist imprisoned for historical child sex offences.

Steve Dawson, Saxon's bassist from 1975 to 1986, has been jailed for six years for historical child sex offences. In a trial at Sheffield Crown Court, Dawson, 72, was found guilty of repeatedly abusing a six-year-old girl during the 1990s. He had earlier been found guilty of four counts of indecent assault of a child under 14. His six-year jail term included one year out on license.

Nicknamed 'Dobby', Dawson was a founder member of Saxon. After guitarist Graham Oliver left Saxon in 1995, he and Dawson reunited as Oliver/Dawson Saxon, and played together until Dawson retired from performing in 2021.

Oliver said Dawson's former bandmates were "shocked" and "disgusted" at his "predatory behaviour against a small child", and hoped the verdict might provide "some closure on her terrible ordeal". **PB/DL**

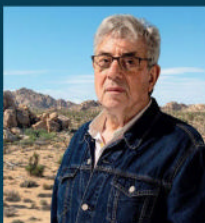
NEWS

Fresh from its triumph in the UK, **Black Sabbath - The Ballet** will visit the Netherlands this year for four dates, followed by a pair of shows in Luxembourg and two in Germany, before heading to the USA for a run of seven performances over five days in 2025.

Nightwish have announced a new studio album. The Finnish-Dutch symphonic metal band release *Yesterwynde* on September 20 via Nuclear Blast. Band leader Tuomas Holopainen says: "Three years in the making, we're thrilled beyond words to soon share our tenth album with the world."

Vince Neil has taken a swipe at *Generation Swine*, the 1997 album that saw him return to fronting Mötley Crüe, and which the band had begun with singer John Corabi and producer Bob Rock. "I hated that record. I still hate that record," Neil says. "[There are] no good songs on it."

Although **Twisted Sister** officially retired in 2016, frontman Dee Snider reveals that the band continually receive offers to play live again. "They get bigger and bigger," he reveals, "and at some point you've gotta say: 'Well, how can I say no to that?'"



Brian May, Ringo Starr, Hank Marvin, Albert Lee, Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal, Derek Sherinian and Simon Phillips are among the special guests on a new solo album from **Graham Gouldman** (pictured) of 10cc. *I Have Notes* is released on July 5 via Lojinx Records.



WELCOME BACK

Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats

After six years without a new record, they return with one inspired by 70s Italian murder-mystery cinema.

Inspired by 70s Italian slasher horror and crime flicks, Cambridge-based psychedelic doomsters Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats return with an imaginary soundtrack, *Nell' Ora Blu* (The Blue Hour), for their sixth album. It's a bit of a change from their usual busy schedule of touring with the likes of Black Sabbath, King Diamond and Ghost, says founder and frontman Kevin Starrs.

It's been a while since the last Uncle Acid album, 2018's *Wasteland*. You were quite busy, weren't you?

Touring, yes! We went out with King Diamond in Europe, then went to Australia, New Zealand and Japan... We were one of the last bands out and playing until lockdown in 2020.

The King Diamond shows must have been a blast.

We were his personal choice to support, and he was really friendly to us, although he never saw us play as he had to do fan meet-and-greets while we were on stage. I like a lot of his work, and [his former band] Mercyful Fate. He's got a great voice and puts on such a good show.

You're back with *Nell' Ora Blu*. Fill us in. This is what I was up to during lockdown. It's inspired by seventies Italian murder-mystery cinema, the giallo genre [which comes from pulp paperbacks]. Years ago I got into forties and fifties film noir and somehow moved on to the Italian stuff, which is quite wild, sexual and horrific, and features a lot of detective work and shadowy figures. It was a psychedelic version of film noir. I'd always wanted to do a soundtrack sort of thing, but expand on the idea, so writing a script, recording dialogue and having sound effects included. This was my opportunity.

You brought in two classic actors for this. Tell us about them.

Frank Nero is known for being quite over-the-top, and I wanted that for his role, Scarano – someone unhinged! Edwige Fenech has one of the most distinctive voices in giallo. She's a screen legend, and even though she couldn't communicate in English with me she delivered perfectly recorded parts straight away.

Did you learn Italian in order to write the script?

I tried to [laughs], but I had to use a translator. And there was a lot of back-and-forth with the actors – this was a totally new experience for all of us. I also had to focus on learning new instruments, such as keyboards, which

I can't play too well and I had to try to get tunes out of them. A lot of it was improvised: hit 'record', play the dialogue and start creating something on the keyboard.

You use a lot of synths on this.

It was important to use a lot of old analogue synths as well, because they just sound better when you record them. And a lot of the effects that we used were analogue. One of my favourites was a Crumar Stringman, a vintage Italian synthesiser, which Neil Young used on *Like A Hurricane*.

The record's quite proggy, with a Tangerine Dream/John Carpenter feel. I love that stuff, and I actually used a unit that Tangerine Dream used a lot, Compact Phasing. It's got a great, eerie filter sweep. It was so much fun to try out all this stuff. The next record might be krautrock! **JK**

Nell' Ora Blu is out now via *Rise Above*.



“The biggest compliment ever is when someone says: ‘I’ve just seen a stadium show in a club.’”

★ HIGH HOPES

The Karma Effect

Meet the young classic rock revivalists with a stadium-style approach to shows and songs.

Henry Gottelier’s “type-A personality” is easy to spot. It’s there in his vocals (like a young, slightly hyperactive Steven Tyler). It’s embedded in his band’s second record, *Promised Land*, a swaggeringly confident set packed with meaty grooves, suntanned melodies and Black Crowes-esque southern fringes. And it’s written into their performances, which have blossomed since their first gig, a sit-down affair at Leo’s Red Lion in Gravesend, mid-pandemic.

“People are paying a lot of money, up and down the country, to come see us play now,” the frontman enthuses. “And you can get up there and wear whatever you want, as long as you own it. I mean, Tommy Lee wore a leopard print thong for four years. You build your identity around that.”

The Karma Effect haven’t embraced such sartorial choices, at least not yet, but they’ve always appreciated rock’n’roll characters of yore. Now mostly in their twenties, they absorbed the heavy likes of Avenged Sevenfold as teens, but it was classic rock that they bonded over. Aged 13, Gottelier was singing Guns N’ Roses hits in school concerts, commanding the attention of drummer Ash Powell and bassist Liam Quinn in the process.

“I have vivid memories of you guys doing covers of *Burn* by

Deep Purple,” Powell says, grinning. “And *Strutter* by Kiss. You used to have a bag with all those sewn-on patches. I’d look at the band names and go: ‘I’m gonna listen to them.’ There was an AC/DC one, a Megadeth one...”

After high school in Surrey, Gottelier and Powell moved to Brighton to study at BIMM. Strapped for cash upon graduating, they set up Classic Rock Revival, a tribute act covering the likes of Steely Dan and Bad Company in theatres across the country. A mix of these gigs, session work and music teaching sharpened their chops, and kept them financially afloat. But they still dreamed of playing their own music again. As the pandemic raged on, Gottelier made plans for a solo project, but realised that he wanted a band – a *really* good one. The Karma Effect were born.

“With The Karma Effect, we’re a club band at the moment, and the biggest compliment ever is when someone says: ‘I’ve just seen a stadium show in a club.’”

Completed by guitarist Robbie Blake and keyboard player Seb Emmins, they welcome the recent surge of competition, singing the praises of fellow retroists like Greta Van Fleet, These Wicked Rivers and Dirty Honey.

“I think rock music is really healthy at the moment,” Gottelier says. “And not just rock. The actual aesthetic of a group of musicians getting together and playing instruments is really healthy. Band music is coming back, thick and fast.” **PG**

Promised Land is out now via Earache.

FOR FANS OF...



“With this new album, we wanted to make it bigger and better than the first,” Ash explains, “adding things like horns and big gospel vocals. *Pump* was a big reference point. Incredible album.” Henry agrees: “There’s something about the production on that later stuff. And Steven Tyler’s voice. It oozes just swagger.”

David Bowie

Absolute Beginners

Taken from an idea through to a finished song in time left over after David Bowie recorded a clandestine demo, it led to a “functional” guitarist working with Bowie for the next 10 years.

Words: **Ian Fortnam**

Having crafted his enduring legend in the 70s, David Bowie had never been anywhere near as commercially successful as he was in the early 80s. 1983's *Let's Dance* album was huge, its accompanying six-month Serious Moonlight tour enormous. Its '84 follow-up *Tonight* did similar business, but behind the scenes Bowie was facing something of a writer's block. Aside from *Tonight's* singles (*Loving The Alien*, *Blue Jean*) all of its constituent material were co-writes (largely with Iggy Pop) and covers. Bowie needed inspiration. So when in the spring of '85 film director Julien 'The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle' Temple approached him to write the theme song for his ambitious musical adaptation of Colin MacInnes' classic 1959 proto-mod novel *Absolute Beginners* (and to play the part of Vendice Partners) he leapt at the chance.

Meanwhile, former Thomas Dolby sideman Kevin Armstrong's career was in free fall. “In the shitter, to be honest,” admits the guitarist, with rather more cheeriness than one might expect. Groomed for solo stardom by EMI, Armstrong had a debut album already recorded (which he owned outright), video made, name remixers and band in place, but “it all came crashing down”.

While in a state of “Well, what do I do now?” the phone rang. It was Hugh Stanley-Clarke, an A&R man at EMI, who simply stated: “Go to Abbey Road. Take a guitar. You'll thank me later.”

“We weren't told who we were there to play for,” Armstrong says, “We were just a bunch of mid-level jobbing musicians who were told: ‘Go to Abbey Road, Mr X will turn up. He's not supposed to be in the country for tax reasons, so we're not allowed to tell you who it is.’”

Anyway, you're probably ahead of me now – Mr X was David Bowie.

“He didn't need name players, just functional musicians to do some demos with.”

The first track the band worked on was

That's Motivation (Bowie's other contribution to the *Absolute Beginners* soundtrack). A complex piece, Bowie taught the musicians each segment in isolation, committing it to tape before moving onto the next section. A tortuous process, but it worked.

With time remaining at the end of the session, Bowie said: “I've got this idea for a song, there's still some time on the clock, let's try and work it up.”

“So I sat down with him,” remembers Armstrong, “with an acoustic guitar, with him writing lyrics on a pad. He already had some lyrics and most of the song, but he didn't have the complete structure.”

Fifteen minutes later, the band were recording a demo of *Absolute Beginners'* ultimate arrangement.

“Listening to the playback, all of us were going: ‘My god, what a tearjerker.’ We knew it was going to be something good.”

“We were just mid-level jobbing musicians who were told: ‘Go to Abbey Road, Mr X will turn up.’”

Bowie was equally impressed, and invited Armstrong, bassist Matthew Seligman and drummer Neil Conti to appear on the actual *Absolute Beginners* recording session to be held the following week with co-producers Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley.

Almost as an afterthought, Bowie added: “I also need a girl, that sounds like a shop girl, to duet with me.”

“So me,” Armstrong remembers, “being a snottily confident young person wanting to get my oar in, said: ‘My sister works in Dorothy Perkins.’ And without hesitation he said: ‘Get her in.’ He didn't say have you got a tape or a picture, just ‘Invite her along, she's in.’”

Janet Armstrong had sung with a few punk bands, most notably the Normil Hawaiians, but this was off the charts; the stuff of fairy tales. And yes, that is her singing on the record.

Much of what might appear to be

additional ornature added in the track's ultimate incarnation was actually there from the very beginning, not least its defining introductory ‘Bop-bop-ba-oooh’ vocal refrain. Also key to the final version's enduring appeal, Rick Wakeman, an occasional Bowie collaborator since '69's *Space Oddity*, whose florid piano stylings (almost ABBA-esque on the climactic choruses) entered the fray.

“It was an exciting day in the studio,” Armstrong recalls, “because Bowie wasn't the only artist in the building on the day recording their parts for *Absolute Beginners*. Jerry Dammers, Slim Gaillard, even Mick Jagger. *That's Motivation*, *Absolute Beginners* and *Dancing In The Street* (the duet Jagger and Bowie recorded for transmission during Live Aid) were all done at the same session, in the same studio with the same band. Then, when all the productive work had been done, we

were all put on buses with bottles of wine, to Docklands to watch David and Mick poncing about doing the *Dancing In The Street* video.”

With *Absolute Beginners* in the can, topped off with an expressive saxophone solo

from Alan Price sideman Don Weller, Armstrong set to work on another project Bowie had casually dropped into his lap at Abbey Road: to put a live band together for “this charity show I've been asked to do”.

So, yes, that would be Live Aid, then. The Global Jukebox. A show watched by an estimated 1.9 billion... “This charity show I've been asked to do.”

A mere fortnight prior to meeting with Bowie and Jagger to discuss their recording of *Dancing In The Street*, Armstrong was effectively homeless, his career in tatters: “I think I probably would have found a way forward without it, but obviously that phone call putting me in touch with Mr X was a massive kick up the arse.”

Kevin Armstrong went on to work with Bowie for the next 10 years. ●

Kevin Armstrong's autobiography Absolute Beginner is out now published by Jawbone.



IT'S THE REAL THING

Midway through their first meeting, David Bowie sat down on a studio sofa with Kevin Armstrong and asked: “Can you get me any coke?”

So Armstrong rang a friend, who duly sent a package to Abbey Road's reception.

Calling Armstrong to confirm this arrangement, the unnamed friend revealed: “You'll never guess who it came from... Angie Bowie.”

To which Armstrong, replied somewhat hastily: “And you'll never guess who it's for... David Bowie.”

Delighted with this uncanny coincidence, Armstrong immediately told his new chum, Bowie “freaked out”. “Having known the guy for just an hour, I'd suddenly possibly divulged to his ex-wife that he was a coke customer.”

David Bowie photographed for
the cover of his single *Absolute
Beginners*, London, 1986.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE

March 3, 1986

HIGHEST

CHART

POSITION

UK No.2

PERSONNEL

David Bowie

Vocals

Rick Wakeman

Piano

Kevin

Armstrong

Guitar

Matthew

Seligman

Bass

Neil Conti

Drums

Luis Jardim

Percussion

Mac Gollehon,

John Thirkell

Trumpets

Don Weller,

Gary Barnacle,

Paul Weimar,

Willie Garnett,

Andy

MacKintosh,

Gordon Murphy

Saxophones

Steve Nieve

Keyboards

Janet Armstrong

Backing vocals

WRITTEN BY

David Bowie

PRODUCED BY

David Bowie,

Alan Winstanley,

Clive Langer

LABEL

Virgin

Chris Spedding

The legendary sideman and session guitarist on a “naughty” 70s, discovering the Sex Pistols and being an honorary Beatle.

Interview: **Bill DeMain**

Who’s played with Elton John, Bryan Ferry, Paul McCartney and The Wombles? As one of the world’s most versatile guitar heroes, Chris Spedding has defied easy categorisation over his storied 60-year career. As he approaches his eightieth birthday, the Derbyshire-born virtuoso with the silver quiff still enjoys recording and touring, adding tasty, understated licks to whatever project comes his way. “I always try to inject some *Spedding element*, to make it different,” he says with a smile.

You started playing violin when you were nine years old. What made you switch to guitar?

I grew up in a household where opera was always on the radio. My mother sang in the local choir, my father played organ in church. That’s why I chose violin. I had an aptitude for it, but my heart wasn’t in it. When I was twelve I heard skiffle, and Elvis singing *Hound Dog*. I thought: “What am I doing with this rubbish violin?” Girls talk to me when I play the guitar.

Were any of your neighbours worried about you becoming a juvenile delinquent?

Listening to rock’n’roll would be the same as if your precious young son suddenly decided to listen to gangsta rap. So people in my town would say: “We’re very worried about Chris” [laughs].

In the early seventies, when you were an in-demand session guy, what was a typical week like?

I might do a session for some middle-of-the-road artist like Petula Clark in the morning, then play with John Cale in the afternoon. I could take the lick of the day – whatever guitar thing I was working on – and fit it into both. Nobody would know. Who was going to buy Petula Clark’s record and John Cale’s record, and say: “Hey, I recognise that lick!” So when people say: “You’re very versatile, playing with all these different artists,” the opposite is true. I just played the same thing. And never got caught out. Until now.

Any memories of working with Harry Nilsson?

I’d heard stories about the John Lennon ‘lost weekend’ with Harry – partying and all the craziness. But there was none of that in the studio. Harry was very focused. There were some great players there – Peter Frampton, Herbie Flowers, Ringo. But those were the days where you’d sometimes do a hundred takes; tape boxes everywhere. Then usually, after listening for hours and hours, through all the takes, they’d go: “I think we got it on take two”.

What do you recall about your hit single *Motorbikin*?

I’d done some work with [producer] Mickey Most on a Donovan album, and we hit it off quite well. So I went back to Mickey with this idea for a song, *Motorbikin*. It was almost like one of those Hollywood scenes, where he was sitting there smoking a cigar, with his feet up on the desk, saying: “That’s gonna be a hit record, son!” By the end of that week we’re in a studio cutting it. And it was a hit.

How did you come to make the first demos for the Sex Pistols?

Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren had a shop called Let It Rock, and she used to make fifties-style Teddy-boy clothes for me. Chrissie Hynde worked there too, and she invited me down to the 100 Club to see the Pistols. There were no A&R guys, just about fifteen die-hard fans. And only about half that by the time they finished, because they’d frighten people off.

After, I went to a rehearsal and listened to their whole repertoire. We recorded *No Feelings*, *Pretty Vacant* and *Problems*. It was fascinating to be around them, because they were teenagers and I was in my thirties. I didn’t really identify with all the angst of the punk rock thing, but I loved the energy. After we made the demos, [producer] Chris Thomas got interested. And they were totally into Chris, because they were secretly big fans of Roxy Music. That all comes out later on, that they like music by these super-boring old farts [laughs].

Didn’t you have the opportunity to own the master tapes of those Pistols demos?

I didn’t really trust Malcolm McLaren. I thought he was sort of a spiv. So before I went in the studio, I said: “I’ll give you my time and my expertise, but I won’t get stuck with the bill.” I thought I was being really smart. In fact, if I’d have paid for those sessions I would have owned the masters, and would have probably made quite a killing out of it.

What do you recall about working with Paul McCartney on the music for *Give My Regards To Broad Street*?

We recorded in Air Studios, and I thought I’d died and gone to heaven, because the people in the studio were Paul and Linda, George Martin producing, Geoff Emerick engineering and Ringo playing the drums. I was the only non-Beatle there! On the film sessions, in the downtime we jammed on Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, Elvis; nobody dared to do a Beatles song. But I’ve thought: “If only those jams had been recorded, it would’ve been total gold.” And it would’ve made the movie fantastic. But nobody was going to tell Paul that.

Is it true that you have an avid Japanese fan who comes to all of your gigs?

Yes, his name is Toshio. I first met him when I was touring Japan in the nineties. By 1992 he’d started doing a fanzine. And then when the internet started he made it into a website. Thanks to Toshio, I had a website [chrisspedding.com] before I even had a computer.

You look amazing for almost eighty.

I’ve done all the naughty things that I shouldn’t have done, back in the seventies [laughs]. So the way I live now might seem to be boring. But I like it. I live by the south coast, in an apartment overlooking the beach. Very sedate. And every now and then I get to go out and play some rock’n’roll. 🍷

For more info, visit chrisspedding.com

Chris Spedding: you might not know his name, but you've probably heard his playing.



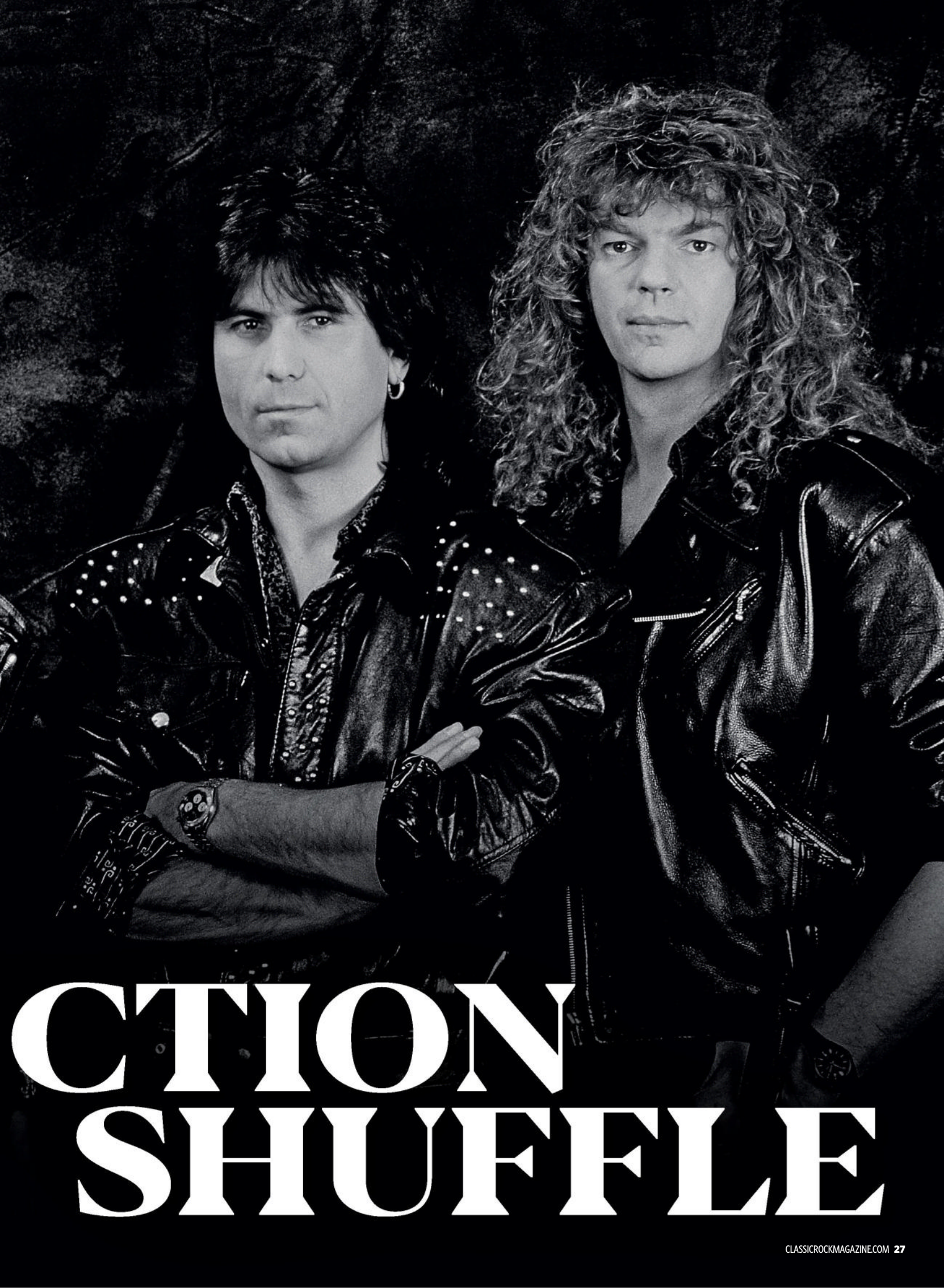
"I didn't really identify with all the angst of the punk rock thing, but I loved the energy."



THE RESURRE

Dio was out, Gillan was gone, Geezer had given up. And Ozzy? Ozzy had declared war... Into the blackness surrounding **Black Sabbath** came light in the shape of singer Tony Martin, and the next chapter in the band's ever eventful story began.

Words: **Dave Ling**



CTION SHUFFLE

BLACK SABBATH



"I wanna see your... money!" Ozzy Osbourne and Tony Iommi with Black Sabbath at the Live Aid concert in Philadelphia, July 13, 1985.



Olé! Sabbath in Spain in '83 on the *Born Again* tour: (l-r) Tony Iommi, Bev Bevan, Ian Gillan, Geezer Butler.



The *Seventh Star* ('86) Sabbath line-up: (l-r) Dave Spitz, Glenn Hughes, Tony Iommi, Eric Singer, Geoff Nicholls.

In the autumn of 1987, Tony Martin received a phone call from his manager, inviting him to take a drive around the pair's native Birmingham. At the time, Martin was the frontman with a local band called The Alliance. They had recorded a session for BBC Radio's *The Friday Rock Show* and, thanks to a development deal with Warner Brothers Records, recorded an impressive demo tape that was generating a little below-the-radar attention.

Martin's manager, Albert Chapman, was the owner of The Elbow Room, a rough-and-tumble nightclub on the city's Aston High Street. Chapman had been a schoolmate of some of the members of Black Sabbath, and took on the role as their tour manager during the band's rise to international success during the mid-70s. Consequently, Chapman knew almost everybody on the rock scene, especially in the Midlands. On the afternoon concerned, when Martin enquired about their destination, Chapman remained evasive.

"So, we pull up at this house, Albert knocks on the front door," Martin says now, "and when it opens, fuck me, there stands Tony Iommi."

Backtracking just a little, Chapman had put forward the name of his young charge a couple of years earlier, at a time when Sabbath were having issues with their latest frontman, former Trapeze and Deep Purple bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes.

"I don't know what those issues were," Martin insists. "All I remember is that when Albert said: 'I've put you up for that job. Are you interested?' I replied: 'Whaaat?!' I couldn't sing like Glenn Hughes – nobody can. But they [Sabbath] put me on standby. And it scared me to death. In the end the issues with Glenn were sorted out and they released the album *Seventh Star*."

"I thought nothing more about it, but later on

give it a go.' And that was my introduction to being in Black Sabbath."

Having signed on the dotted line, Tony Martin became enshrined as a member of one of the most important hard rock and heavy metal bands of them all. Unfortunately, however, in spite of all his efforts Martin was not destined to receive all that he signed up for. Over the next decade the singer would experience all that life in a once

iconic but now ailing band could throw at him, including five albums, two sackings and multiple world tours. Martin went on to become Black Sabbath's second-longest-serving lead singer, after Ozzy Osbourne, but his tenure brought its share of uncertainty, frustration, and heartbreak.

Within minutes of talking to the gregarious, straight-talking and likable Martin it becomes apparent that he really doesn't give a shit about negativity. Not any more, anyway. His time fronting Sabbath was about seizing an unexpected opportunity. A chance to be creative, in defiance of what seemed like pretty insurmountable odds.

Which is exactly what happened. Incredibly, the new-look band went on to create some of the best albums in Sabbath's sizeable catalogue (which have now been retooled as the four-disc set *Anno Domini 1989–1995*).

By the late 80s, Black Sabbath had descended into a shit-show. Ronnie James Dio quitting to form his own band began the slippery slope. Former Deep Purple singer Ian Gillan sang on the love-or-loathe *Born Again* album, and fronted the band on a tour that inspired *Spinal Tap*, with its outsized Stonehenge

"I really love the stuff we did back then with Tony Martin and Cozy [Powell], but it was a frustrating time."

Tony Iommi

Albert called back and asked: 'Do you want to have a go with the guys?' I thought: 'Fucking hell, this is a bit mad'. But he was serious."

On the day in question, despite the previous conversations, Martin had zero knowledge of who he was about to meet. "It had all been a bit cloak-and-dagger," he says, smiling. Chapman and Martin were invited in for a chat, and before too long the singer attended an audition in London.

"I was asked to sing *The Shining*, which became the opening song on *The Eternal Idol*," he recalls, "and right away I was told: 'You've got the job.' But before it soaked in they added: 'The album has got to be finished in seven days.'" My response was: 'Okay, I'll



Dave Spitz and Ray Gillen with Sabbath at Hammersmith Odeon, London, June '86, on the *Seventh Star* tour.



stage prop, and had ELO's Bev Bevan on drums. Factor in Gillan's reluctance to learn the lyrics, and a disastrous sleeve design of a baby with claws and horns, not to mention the imminent reunion of Purple's Mk II line-up, and Sabbath now resembled the proverbial house of cards awaiting a stray gust of wind.

Martin had entered the frame because American singer Ray Gillen, a replacement for Hughes during a US tour for *Seventh Star* that was abandoned due to poor ticket sales, had walked out during the recording of Sabbath's next album, *The Eternal Idol*, to join guitarist John Sykes in Blue Murder.

Depending on whether or not you include former male model David Donato (whose appointment was announced and then rapidly cancelled after he had told the press: "I always had a [mental] picture of what the right singer in Sabbath should be – and it was me"), Jeff Fenolt of Christian rockers Joshua (rumoured to have been hired and fired just as speedily) and co-founder Ozzy Osbourne (who returned for a disastrous, drunk showing at Live Aid in Philadelphia), Martin was either the third, fourth or fifth lead singer in Black Sabbath since Ian Gillan waved goodbye in March 1984.

When asked to sum up the aforementioned half-decade in the history of Black Sabbath, Tony Iommi, the last man standing from the classic era, is momentarily lost for words.

"It was chaos," he eventually replies, laughing. "Just chaos. When somebody left, fine, you bring somebody else in. And when they go, you do the same thing. After a while it gets pretty tedious, but what's the alternative?"

Sabbath concluded their more than five-decade-long career with a sold-out world tour, ending in Birmingham in February 2017, and the band were inducted to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2006. It's strange to think of them as an underdog, but by the mid-80s that's what the group had become. And yet, amid the chaos around him, Iommi managed to lead the band towards the creation of some albums that fans still rank among their finest.

"I really love the stuff we did back then with Tony Martin and Cozy [Powell], but it was a frustrating time," Iommi states. "People had to really try to accept what we were doing. And although it was a great band and we had some really good music, those albums didn't really catch on. As the man running [the band], I found that difficult."

In his autobiography *Iron Man*, Iommi reveals how a previous manager had left the band with huge tax problems. A decaying relationship with Sabbath's long-time label Vertigo was another >

Keeper of the flame: Tony Iommi, the only ever-present member of Sabbath, in '87.



None less Black: the short-lived line-up of (l-r) Terry Chimes, Geoff Nicholls, Tony Martin, Tony Iommi and Jo Burt in 1987.





You've been framed: Tony Martin on the video shoot for *Headless Cross*, February 1989.



Tony Iommi and Brian May recording at Metropolis Studios, London, for Rock Aid Armenia, the Armenian earthquake appeal, July 8, 1989.

cause for near-perpetual sense of firefighting.

"Ever since I've been in this business it's been like that," Iommi says. "There were problems pretty much since day one. You just have to believe in yourself and try to see beyond those situations. Had I not done so, then I'd have packed up long ago."

Did he come close to packing it in?

"No. As I say, there were always awful things to contend with, life is like that," he shrugs. "It's the thought of keeping things going and getting to the next level that drives you on. You give in or fight through it, and I wouldn't give in. That's part of my character, one way or another I always want to carry on."

As much as joining Sabbath represented a great opportunity for Tony Martin, looking in from the outside it was obvious that the band were in a constant state of chaos, and yet the singer insists that there was no trepidation.

"None at all – I didn't have time to think!" he says, grinning. "I knew they didn't have any money, Albert had warned me, so I went in and did what needed to be done."

Martin provided Iommi with the stability he needed. With Ray Gillen's voice wiped from the tapes, the newcomer soon proved his worth.

"Albert Chapman was my best friend, we'd been at school together, and he was managing The Alliance," Iommi recalls of the introduction to his new lead vocalist. "We had reached a point with Ray Gillen where there was a problem, and Albert reminded me about Tony. He was great. The guy could really sing, and once he was on board things grew from there."

Although later on he would supply lyrics, this time, with songs already written, Martin was relieved to ease himself in gently by simply singing what he had been told. When it came to live shows for *The Eternal Idol*, Iommi remembers that Martin was thrown in at the deep end.

"It was a huge responsibility for Tony," he acknowledges. "He was so green. Following Ronnie and Ozzy, and Gillan really, was a bloody hard challenge – especially in front of a Sabbath crowd. It was difficult for Tony, and I expected him to come up to the mark. Because I was so busy thinking about pushing forward, I didn't really consider the fact that he was now in a totally different

world. But he stuck with it, and he got much better."

Martin's first gig with the band was in the Greek capital Athens. "My debut was supposed to be a festival in Bristol,

but nobody turned up and the promoter went bust," he recalls.

Being on stage with Sabbath was far from a fun experience for Martin. "Mate, just assume that throughout my entire career with Sabbath I was shit-scared," he says with a smile. "It never let up. Those guys already had twenty-five years of experience. As much as I learned, I was never going to catch them up."

Iommi doesn't recall whether or not he put an arm around Martin's shoulder in a fatherly way to reassure the newcomer that things would be fine.

"I hope I did," he ponders optimistically. "But you're going back thirty-odd years."

"Actually, Tony didn't do that at all," Martin says, laughing, although without a trace of animosity. "I was left standing alone in the dark, trying to match up to these iconic singers that had gone before. I had no idea what I was doing, though I knew my voice was alright."

"They would say with the next album we're going to do this or that, and I'd reply: 'What? I'm going to do another one?' So I guess they must have liked what I was doing."

Another cause for uncertainty in Martin's mind was the never-ending speculation that he was going to be replaced by a returning Ozzy or Dio: "I was having to constantly read between the lines to find my position in the band. It was a perpetual learning curve."

Sabbath had two managers, who often didn't talk to one another. Things were so shambolic that for the shooting of a video for *The Shining*, Terry Chimes of The Clash guested on drums, and





Another day, another Sabbath: (l-r) Tony Iommi, Cozy Powell, Tony Martin and Neil Murray, September 1989.

the band roped in a now forgotten guitarist they'd never even met to mime the bass parts.

The Eternal Idol reached No.66 in the UK, and in the US stalled at No.168.

Artistically speaking, *Idol* represented a step up from unbalanced predecessor *Seventh Star*, which Iommi had sought to release as a solo album, but commercially the stats were massively disappointing. Almost two decades after Sabbath's self-titled debut, their label Vertigo dropped the band.

Undeterred, Iommi signed a new four-album deal to join an eclectic roster of the independent label I.R.S., run by Miles Copeland. One of the industry's true mavericks, Copeland was also the manager of The Police (and brother of their drummer Stewart), having learned his craft through looking after Wishbone Ash.

"Miles is an interesting person, very noisy and loud," Iommi says, laughing. "What I liked was that he told me: 'You know what to do... just do it and the rest is up to me.' We had artistic freedom. We didn't need millions of quid, just somebody to get behind us."

It speaks volumes of the complicated nature of this era in Black Sabbath's history that all five of their albums with Martin cannot be neatly tied up with a bow and presented as one. As the band's swan song for Vertigo (Warner Brothers in the US), *The Eternal Idol* is not a part of the new boxed set.

For the next album, Iommi put together what he hoped would be a more solid line-up of himself, Martin, faithful keyboard player Geoff Nicholls, drummer Cozy Powell and bassist Laurence Cottle. Iommi had wanted to work with Powell for many years, and after leaving Gary Moore's band the former Rainbow, Whitesnake and Michael Schenker Group the drummer happened to be a free agent.

"Getting somebody credible like Cozy was a great boost," Iommi says enthusiastically. "This was somebody who had seen everything and been

"I wasn't overly familiar with Neil, but once I heard him play, that was it – we were off!" Iommi exclaims. Given Murray's background, which included a stint with prog-jazz-rockers Colosseum II, he was perhaps not an obvious choice, and Murray says that while he was comfortable in the role, covering "the complicated bits and pieces" played by Cottle on *Headless Cross* and also remaining faithful to Geezer Butler's playing on the earlier Sabbath material was "a bit of a juggling act".

There was also the matter of the dark subject matter of Sabbath's songs. "Certain lyrics didn't really appeal to me," Murray says with a chuckle. "But the same had also been true of some of mister Coverdale's songs."

With budgets for everything, including producers, now under scrutiny, the 'new' Black Sabbath found themselves staying in far smaller hotels than previously,

although the resulting levels of camaraderie made the quartet a tough, self-sufficient little unit. "Sabbath felt more like it had done in the early days," Iommi reflects. "It was a real band."

As a lyricist, Tony Martin came into his own on 1989's *Headless Cross*. Nothing to do with Satanism, the album's title track took its name from the village in Reddich in which he lived. "It told the tale of a plague in the 1600s," he explains.

Full of high-quality songs including its tense, memorable title track, *Devil And Daughter* and the brooding *When Death Calls*, which featured ➤

“It was difficult to ignore that Sabbath were still seen as Ozzy, Tony, Geezer and Bill. Particularly in America.

Neil Murray

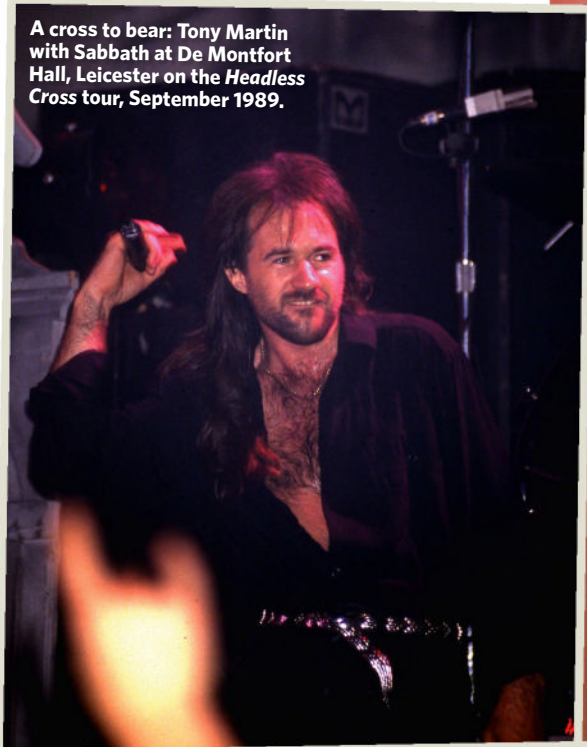
through it all, as I had. When Cozy stayed at my house, we'd be up late half-pissed writing songs on a cassette, and then laying them down the following day."

Although jazz and fusion bassist Cottle played on the session, led by Iommi and Powell, he left once the recording was complete.

With original bassist Geezer Butler on the verge of rejoining, only to change his mind, it was Powell who proposed his former Whitesnake bandmate Neil Murray, fresh out of Japanese hard rockers Vow Wow, to complete the rhythm section.

BLACK SABBATH

A cross to bear: Tony Martin with Sabbath at De Montfort Hall, Leicester on the *Headless Cross* tour, September 1989.



Cozy Powell and Tony Iommi in Hollywood in 1989.

a guest guitar solo from Iommi's good friend Brian May, *Headless Cross* put Black Sabbath back on the map. In Britain it fell just short of the Top 30. In the US, where the band complained bitterly of being unable to find it in the stores when they were on tour there, it narrowly missed making it into *Billboard*'s Hot 100.

"We had started all over again, but *Headless Cross* really boosted us," Iommi says proudly. "People began to respect us once more."

All the same, it's vital to remember the extreme bad blood that simmered at the time between Iommi and Ozzy Osbourne, who since being sacked by the band in 1979 had become a superstar, especially in America. Consequently, when Sabbath began touring the US for *Headless Cross*, the Osbourne set-up used every trick in the book to derail them. "Each night, Sharon put Ozzy in the same cities that we were booked to play," Martin remembers. "They wanted to split the fans, and it worked."

After just eight dates, Sabbath's tour was cancelled due to poor ticket sales. "I can't state for sure that [the play] was calculated, but they were

powerful enough. They didn't like the fact that we were touring and it was being sort of successful."

Continuing the excellent work begun with *Headless Cross*, in February 1990 the band began recording the fourteenth Black Sabbath album. Cozy Powell had suggested it should be titled *The Satanic Verses*, in honour of Salman Rushdie's controversial book. For obvious reasons this idea was quickly overruled. *Tyr*, with lyrics based on Norse mythology, was released in the summer of 1990.

"*Headless Cross* was a crash course in English history, so *Tyr* was Viking history," Martin explains. "I had lots of themes in my head, like Samurai warriors. Every culture has its dark side."

"It was hard for Tony," Iommi says, "because Ozzy had done his thing and Ronnie also had his own style. After those two we needed to sing about other things than devils and those areas that Ronnie took us into," he points out, adding with a chuckle: "Death was mentioned a lot."

This time Sabbath *did* make it into the UK Top 30, although in the US *Tyr* failed completely to chart. Nevertheless, Iommi felt quietly confident that momentum was building.

"We had enjoyed making both albums, and we toured, everybody knew what to expect of each other," he recalls. "We were getting things done."

Bassist Neil Murray raises a valid point: "As good as things were musically, it was difficult to ignore that Sabbath were still seen as Ozzy, Tony, Geezer and Bill. No other permutation could exist – particularly in America. In some places that we went, nobody had broken the news that the line-up had changed."

But the 'new' Sabbath fought hard. In an interview of the era, Cozy Powell told *RAW* magazine: "I always believed this band to be far above the rubbish that is written about it. [Before the previous two albums] Black Sabbath's stock with the press couldn't have got any lower. A lot of the fans still believed, but they needed to be convinced. We are getting stick for calling ourselves Black Sabbath, but it's a question of believing in something and maintaining that it's worth keeping."

"The other camp would prefer Black Sabbath to finish, so they can get on with their own careers and make a bit [of money] out of it," Powell continued in a reference to Ozzy Osbourne and co. "But unfortunately for them we're not about to go away and die that easily."

Those comments brought swift rebuke from



All change! The 1992 Sabbath: Vinnie Appice, Geezer Butler, Ronnie James Dio, Tony Iommi.



Rob Halford standing in for Ronnie Dio with Sabbath in 1992 when Dio refused to appear with them at Ozzy's retirement bash.

the Osbourne camp, with Ozzy faxing an extraordinary 'open letter' to RAW, sarcastically addressed to 'Mr Black Sabbath And His Three Droogs', in which each band member was viciously rebuked one by one.

To Iommi he retorted: "I don't care what line-up you have, you could have anyone from Dio to Pavarotti and it will never be Sabbath. Don't belittle that band, Tony, move on."

Having defended their use of the Sabbath name, Powell was told: "Try pushing that drum stick from your asshole so you can think clearly."

Addressing Neil Murray, Ozzy warned: "Get ready for your new gig as Geezer Butler's bass roadie".

Ozzy claimed to be unable to recall Tony Martin's name, before concluding: "I would love to say all of this to your faces, pussies, so call me anywhere anytime."

Reminded of the fracas 34 years later, a milder and more mature Iommi is keen to sweep it under the carpet. "Wow... I don't remember that," he replies cautiously. "There was bad blood, but it's water under the bridge. Ozzy and I have gone through so many things. I played on his last album. Me and Oz are in touch every week. The [positive] way things turned out [between us] is mad, really."

Despite Powell's feisty defence of Sabbath's continuation, following the touring for *Tyr* in 1992 Ronnie Dio was invited to return for what became the *Dehumanizer* album. It had taken two and a half years for Tony Martin to feel like a part of the group, and now, without warning, it was over.

"I was devastated," he remembers. "This was something I hadn't expected. I had thought we were doing alright."

Martin's sacking affected his mental health. "I just withdrew from music for a couple of years," he says sadly.

As much as Iommi had fought against the move, Cozy Powell was booted out of the group by Dio. Powell had declined to play with Dio



after the pair's spell in Rainbow, and now, daggers drawn, the singer held all the cards.

"I remember Cozy going, 'If that little c**t says anything to me, I'm going to smash him in the face,'" Iommi wrote in his book *Iron Man*.

Following a bizarre accident in 1991 when Powell's horse collapsed of of heart attack as he exercised it, breaking his hip and putting him out of action, Dio offered the drum stool to Vinny Appice, Sabbath's drummer on 1981's *Mob Rules* album. For *Dehumanizer*, bassist Geezer Butler also made a surprise return to the band. He had jammed with Sabbath at a gig at London's

"I was left standing alone in the dark, trying to match up to these iconic singers that had gone before."

Tony Martin

Hammersmith Odeon at the end of the *Tyr* tour, and it was Neil Murray who suggested that Butler returning to the line-up would be a good thing.

"I wasn't wishing I was out of the band, but when Geezer played *Black Sabbath* and *Paranoid* with us, the audience reaction made that very obvious," reasons Murray, who, along with Cozy Powell (who died in a car crash in 1998), would join Brian May's solo band. "They wanted two of the four originals instead of one."

Produced by Mack (of Queen fame), *Dehumanizer* sold well, thanks largely to the inclusion of the song *Time Machine* in the soundtrack to the film *Wayne's World*.

It took two years for the reunion with Dio to come to an end, but when it did it was in spectacular fashion.

Sabbath had agreed to play two shows in California as a part of Ozzy Osbourne's retirement, but when Ronnie dug his heels in and refused to appear ("I have more pride than that, I'm not supporting a clown"), Judas Priest frontman Rob Halford stepped in. A reunion of the classic Sabbath line-up appeared to be on the cards, but it didn't happen. Instead, Iommi and Butler reached out to Tony Martin.

In fact, Martin claims to have been present in the background during the *Dehumanizer* sessions, which were slightly troubled: "Tony had called me up and said: 'This isn't going too well with Ronnie. Do you fancy coming along and having a look at what's happening?' But in the end they and Ronnie finished the album."

Although the booklet that comes with the new *Anno Domini 1989-1995* box set insists that Iommi put the Martin-fronted band "on hold" during Dio's second spell, suggesting the guitarist believed it was destined to reconvene, he laughs at such a suggestion.

"With our band you can never say anything for sure. We broke up, came back together, threw somebody out and got them back in again," he shrugs. "With Ozzy it happened two or three times, and twice with Ronnie. Black Sabbath band members are in and out like yo-yos. I've learned

never to write off anything – unless somebody is dead."

The resulting album, 1994's *Cross Purposes*, recorded by Iommi, Butler, Martin, Geoff Nicholls and former Rainbow drummer Bobby Rondinelli, is undervalued in Sabbath's sizeable canon. (Its closing track *Evil Eye* was co-written with Edward Van Halen, but goes uncredited as such due to publishing reasons.)

"I really liked *Cross Purposes*," Iommi states. "Tony was singing great ➤"

OZZY SOUNDS OFF!





Tony Martin (left) and Tony Iommi at the unveiling of the Blue Plaque for Cozy Powell in his home town of Cirencester, Gloucestershire, January 7, 2016.

and the songs were very strong. I didn't know [its co-producer] Leif Mases, but he did an excellent job."

For a short period of time, Bill Ward returned to the line-up (Iommi doesn't recall why Powell didn't return).

"I had told Bill that we were going to South America and he reacted positively, so I asked if he'd like to do those gigs," Iommi says, before saying with a laugh: "Bill asked: 'Great, what shall I do? Meet you there?' 'No, Bill, you must come to England and rehearse the show.' Bill lost track of things and we couldn't do the songs from *Headless Cross* and *Tyr*, so we ended up doing a set of old Sabbath songs. That was a bit awkward."

Although commercially *Cross Purposes* performed more than respectably, charting on both sides of the Atlantic (No.41 in the UK, No.122 in the US), Butler opted to return to Ozzy's solo band. Iommi realised that some stability was necessary: "I said: that's it - I'm getting Neil and Cozy back."

The album Sabbath were about to make was assured of its notoriety when the band's label I.R.S. put forward the name of Ernie C, the guitar player with rapper Ice T's group Body Count, as its producer. As realisation dawned that the album, which would be titled *Forbidden*, was becoming a car crash, Iommi was powerless to hit the brakes. Decades later, Ice-T's spoken word part on the album's track *The Illusion Of Power* remains a genuine WTF moment.

"*Forbidden* has been a thorn in my side for years," Iommi sighs. "I knew all about Ice-T and that he was good, but I didn't expect him to bring along his guitar player to

produce the album. When a band knows its sound and exactly what it wants, bringing in an outsider is very disruptive. I found myself on the sidelines. Our whole situation had become so frail."

To Iommi's disbelief and dismay, Ernie C took Cozy Powell aside and asked him to play in an unfamiliar manner. "Cozy is Cozy, you can't have somebody telling him to do things differently," Iommi remembers, aghast.

"I know why Ice-T and Ernie were brought in. I mean Aerosmith and Run DMC had had their big

"Just assume that throughout my entire career with Sabbath I was shit-scared. It never let up."

Tony Martin

hit [*Walk This Way*]," Martin muses. "But I wasn't even certain I would be on the album, because Ice-T was coming in to 'sing some stuff'. When I asked whether that was one or two tracks, or more, nobody knew. But the work done by Tony has brought the album right up to date. It sounds really Sabbath-y now."

"I found some bits of guitar that Ernie hadn't used [on the original album]," Iommi explains. "Within the obvious constraints, I managed to make things sound a hell of a lot better."

Despite peaking at No.71 in Britain, *Forbidden* dropped off a cliff in the US and remains the least successful Black Sabbath album of them all.

For a musician, going out on the road, playing songs from it for fans and talking to journalists about an

album that they don't believe in is about as bad as it gets, and when reminded, Iommi grimaces.

"*Forbidden* caused a lot of turmoil within the band, but we're professional," he asserts. "But also, at the time we probably didn't see the album quite as we do now. You know, there's some good stuff on *Forbidden*. I wouldn't slate it."

Tony Martin recalls asking several times whether Sabbath's original line-up would be getting back together. Despite assurances to the contrary, that's what happened.

"Like I said earlier, I never write anything off," Iommi states stoically. "When these things happen, they bring problems. Getting back with Ozzy brought problems. You've just got to solve them."

"The second time around, I saw the writing on the wall, and I understood it," Martin says. "Black Sabbath is a major band. You've just got to fit in with that and take the rough with the smooth."

After *Forbidden*, it would be almost two decades of good times and bad, with yet more reunions and sackings, before three of Sabbath's founder members got together with producer Rick Rubin to make 13, the album that now seems set to be their epitaph (Bill Ward was unfortunately not on it due a contractual dispute). Again without Ward, the band's final gig was, fittingly, in their home city of Birmingham, on February 4, 2017.

Iommi and Martin are thrilled to propel the Sabbath records from the time Martin was with the band, for so long overlooked and neglected, back out into the public glare. It's all so long ago that neither of them owns a complete set.

"Sabbath's Tony Martin era has been pushed right into the background. A lot of people didn't even know there were albums with him," Iommi marvels. "I was often asked whether they would come out again and a new generation of kids can listen to them now, hopefully. I'm also pleased for

Tony, because he was messed around a lot [by us] over the years."

"How nice to hear that from Tony,"

Martin says, smiling. "It's the first time I've had validation of that era."

So, given Sabbath's treatment of him, why did Martin remain so loyal?

"In the beginning, I was essentially a nobody off the street," he says modestly. "It must have been hard work

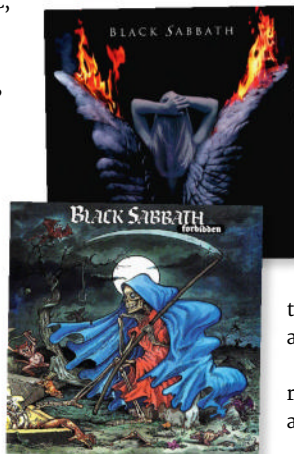
dragging your younger brother around as he learns the ropes. It [getting sacked twice] didn't feel great, but I don't harbour any bad feeling."

Is there a scenario in which the two Tonys could work together again?

"I'd be up for that, and I'm here if Tony needs me," Martin offers. "But I don't realistically think there's any chance of it."

"Like I keep on saying, I never write anything off," Iommi says, grinning. "I'm doing my own album at the minute, and I played on two songs for Ozzy [for his most recent solo album *Patient Number 9*], but I never know what's next. I enjoyed working with the Black Sabbath Ballet [in Birmingham]. I've done some other things that aren't out yet so I can't mention them. Obviously I won't be touring the world for eighteen months again. I'm just happy being where I am. My life is never boring." ●

Anno Domini 1989-1995 is released on May 31 via BMG.





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INTERVIEW
**JON
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“There was no Plan B in my life, ever,” he says. Luckily he didn’t need one. He started in covers bands, got the breaks, went on to mastermind one of the biggest and biggest-selling bands of his era, and became one of its biggest rock stars. And there’s more – much more...

Interview: **Paul Brannigan**

November 7, 1979. The Atlantic City Expressway are on stage at the Stone Pony club in Asbury Park, New Jersey, performing a cover of Bruce Springsteen’s *The Promised Land*, when an audience member jumps on stage, grabs the mic and begins singing the second verse. It takes Atlantic City Expressway’s vocalist John Bongiovi a beat to recognise the interloper as the man who wrote the song.

“I’m a seventeen-year-old kid and suddenly I’m sharing a microphone on stage with the biggest rock star in New Jersey,” he – now Jon Bon Jovi – marvels, 45 years on, looking back on that night while seated on a sofa in an upmarket London hotel room. “I’ve got high school in the morning, and the teacher just sounds like ‘Wah wah wah, wah wah wah’, because I’m thinking Bruce will probably want me to come over to his house tomorrow, now that we’re friends. I had rainbows and unicorns in my head, like an acid trip, because now I had seen the world in colour.”

An astute, driven polymath, a music industry lifer with 130 million album sales to his name,

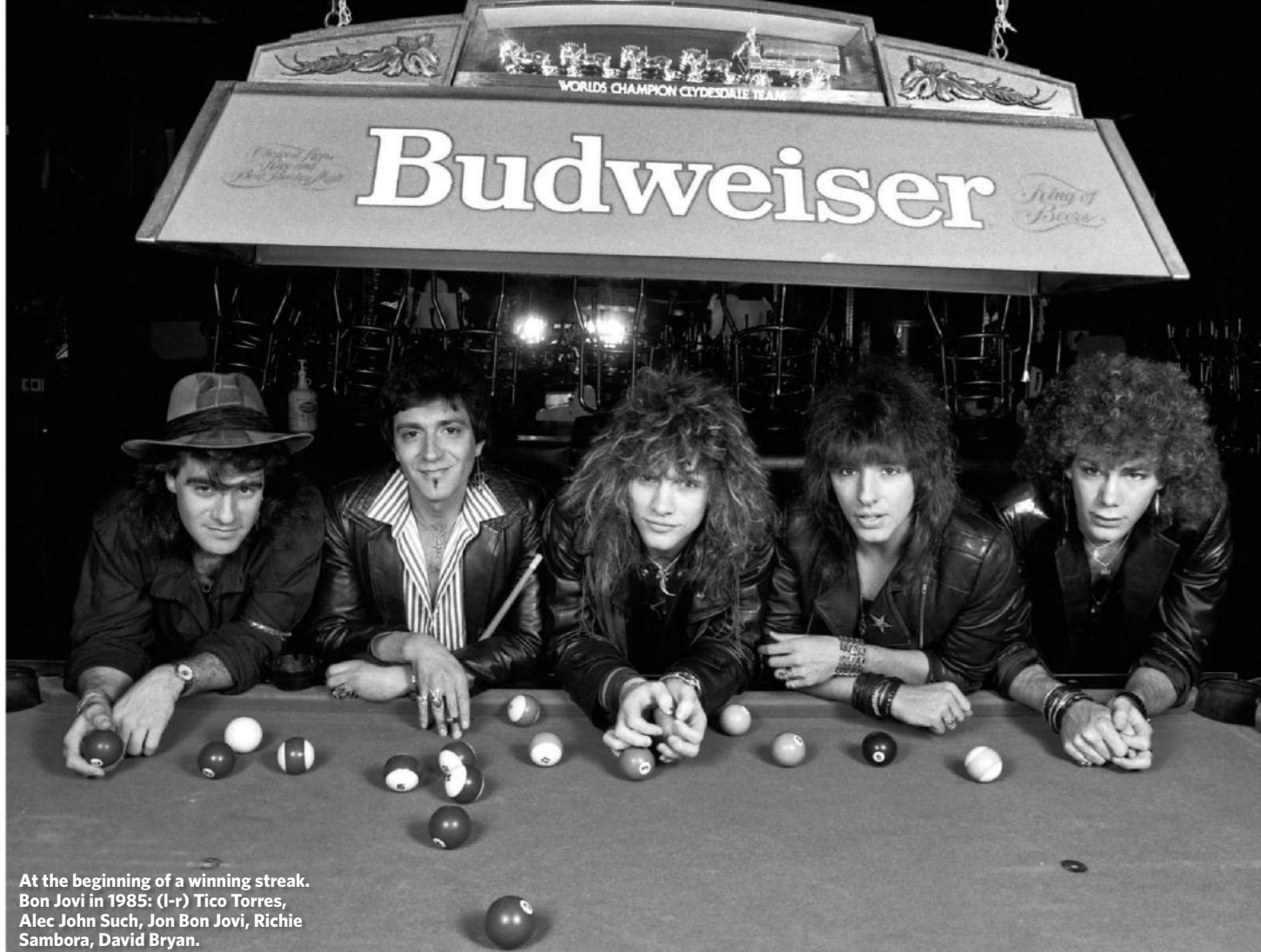
it’s a long time since Jon Bon Jovi had his head in the clouds. The singer/guitarist/band leader is in London to talk up two new projects: his band Bon Jovi’s forthcoming sixteenth album, *Forever*, set for release on June 7, and *Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story*, an insightful four-part Hulu documentary, directed by Gotham Chopra, who has previously made films about American sporting icons Serena Williams, Kobe Bryant, Tom Brady and others,

which aims to shine a light on “a 40-year odyssey of rock’n’roll idolatry”. It’s a measure of how hard Bon Jovi has been working during his four-day stay in London that this afternoon, mid-sentence, he’ll cast a glance across the River Thames, spot an iconic landmark on the South Bank, and exclaim excitedly: “Wait, is that the London Eye?” as if he’s only just now had a moment to take in his surroundings. But then as *Thank You, Goodnight* makes abundantly clear, JBJ has always had his eyes fixed on the prize. “There was no Plan B in my life, ever,” he states emphatically at one point. “It was all or nothing.”

With that said, the 62-year-old hasn’t forgotten what it’s like to be a rock’n’roll dreamer, hoping for ➤







At the beginning of a winning streak. Bon Jovi in 1985: (l-r) Tico Torres, Alec John Such, Jon Bon Jovi, Richie Sambora, David Bryan.

a break. At the end of our hour together, I ask him if he'll record a video message for a friend, an aspiring singer-songwriter who's ploughed thousands of pounds of his own money into recording two albums, encouraging him to keep the faith. Graciously, after quickly checking that his hair is looking good – it is – he does as requested, ending a genuinely touching inspirational speech with the words: "As you know, writing a song is the most euphoria one can ever feel, so keep writing 'em, bud, one of them is gonna click. And as long as they move you, fuck everybody else, right?"

As he passes my phone back, I ask him what advice he'd give to his teenage self, that New Jersey kid dreaming of following in his hero Bruce Springsteen's footsteps, and his reply comes instantly: "I'd say: 'Take the time to enjoy it a little more.'"

Do you remember who John Bongiovi was before music entered your life?

The earliest recollections I have of the twelve-year-old me are very similar to the me I grew up to be, with maybe more of an athletic focus, because I liked to play baseball and football. I had a very typical middle-class upbringing in New Jersey, and initially it was uneventful.

Your mum was a florist and your dad was a barber, and they'd both served in the Marines. They did. That's how they met.

So was yours quite a disciplined household? I didn't think so. And probably nowhere near the upbringing that they had as children. It was a different generation by then. I was born into the era where John Kennedy was the President of the United States, and so The Dream in America was alive and well.

What was the first music that felt authentically yours?

I remember buying the first Aerosmith record, and by the mid-seventies it was Thin Lizzy, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Queen, Zeppelin, Alice Cooper, Elton... mainstream, heavily English-influenced rock'n'roll.

Did punk rock impinge on your life?

For the big brothers of my buddies, yes. We were very aware of The Dictators, The Dead Boys, Ramones, the Pistols, obviously, but it wasn't my personal calling. I didn't dislike it, but it was music for our big brothers.

Do you remember your first time on stage?

It was a talent show in Sayreville, New Jersey. I sang *Strutter* by Kiss, *Johnny B. Goode*, and *Taking Care Of Business* by Bachman Turner Overdrive. I did not win.

But you gave it a shot.

I gave it a shot.

The standard potted history of Jon Bon Jovi is: kid wants to be a rock star, kid works in his cousin's recording studio, kid gets a break with the song *Runaway*, kid becomes a rock star. But watching the *Thank You, Goodnight* documentary, it's obvious that you put in the hard yards, first with *Raze*, then the Atlantic City Expressway, a covers band that I guess was doing good business, and then The Rest who did original songs.

Atlantic City Expressway weren't doing great business, really, but we were performing. I was still in high school, and we were playing in nightclubs where the other bands were ten years older than us, so being that young we stood out. But I knew that to get off that circuit I needed to write my own music.

What did The Rest sound like?

Power-pop/new wave, like New Romantic music, Elvis Costello, whatever. Not great.



"I remember hearing *Runaway* in the car. I wanted the police to pull me over so that I could say: 'That's me on the radio!'"

You started to properly take control of your own destiny with Jon Bongiovi & The Wild Ones, a band who were heavily influenced by the Jersey Shore scene.

Yeah, and that scene was inspiring. Because remember there were ten Asbury Jukes and seven members of the E Street Band, so that's seventeen iterations of Santa Claus who would be in one of the local bars on any given night. You could literally tap them on the shoulder, buy them a beer and ask them anything. And those guys were so kind and generous with their time. Like, Southside Johnny produced the second set of demos that The Rest ever did, and Roy Bittan, from the E Street Band, first played that keyboard riff you know today in *Runaway*.

And then you went to work at The Power Station studio in New York with your cousin Tony.

He's a distant cousin, I'd never met him, but my dad asked him to come and see me perform with The Rest, and he told him: "The band's not very good, but your kid's got something going." So after high school, in September 1980, I called him up, and he allowed me to run errands at the studio.

In the documentary, you say that sometimes you had to bring drugs to the studio, and sometimes you had to bring girls. Could you elaborate on that?

No, I'm gonna leave that there. But that was the era.

You were there when Queen and David Bowie recorded *Under Pressure*. That must have been kinda mind-blowing.

That's my recollection. I've asked my cousin Barry to verify this, saying: "Am I crazy, or is that true?" And he said: "You're right." I'm putting this in a big parenthesis for fear that my memory has slipped, but I do believe that I watched in Studio A as the two of those guys sang.

***Runaway* was a radio hit before Bon Jovi, the band, existed. But initially, when you sent it to record labels, no one was interested.**

I didn't get any answers from anyone, no. But, in retrospect, did it ever actually land on anyone's desk? Did it ever make it out of the mail room? I'll never know. I'd sent it out to all the labels with a handwritten note, because that was the only way I knew to approach them. It wasn't like anyone I knew in Jersey knew the president of a record label.

How did it feel to hear your song, your voice, on the radio for the first time?

I was overjoyed. I remember hearing it on the radio in the car, and it made me want to roll the windows down and drive faster. I wanted the police to pull me over so that that I could say: "That's me on the radio!"

So now you just needed a new band.

Yes. At the time, I was playing a club called the Fast Lane at least two nights a week, and I was



capable of drawing – if I'm generous to myself here – maybe a hundred and twenty-five people to come and see me play with various iterations

of the Wild Ones.

So I get this song on the radio, and the quality of my band members I thought could be better, so I started seeking out guys that I'd seen around. I thought that when I got this new iteration together – which did not include Richie [Sambora] – that it would last for three weeks, because I figured that after three weeks this song will have run its course, but maybe a hundred and fifty people would come to see me now, and I could build from there. That was the mind-set.

With Richie, what was it that you recognised in him that made you think: "This is the guy"?

He came to see us play when Snake Sabo [Skid Row] was filling in on guitar. Dave [Bryan] was

playing keyboards because he had been in the Expressway, Alec [John Such, bass] I'd recruited from a cover band, and Tico [Torres] was the best drummer I've ever fucking seen. Alec got Richie over to see us.

So when Richie shows up, he comes in the dressing room, and we make small talk and I like his presence. So I say: "Well, what are you into?" And he says: "I like Bad Company, and Zeppelin, and I've got my own band, and we're putting out an EP." So we got together once, we started to dabble in writing, and it worked.

Then *Runaway* exploded, I got a record deal, and Richie said: "Okay, I'd rather come with you, with a record deal, than keep slogging it out with my band." I liked him, he was a talented guy, and he could sing. So that was it – Bon Jovi.

What do you remember about the first time you played in England?

It was the Kiss tour, in 1984. I remember we ➤





Good medicine: JBJ fronting Bon Jovi at Wembley Stadium in 1995.

started in Brighton, and Kiss were out with their spray cans of paint, fixing up their set in the afternoon, so that blew away your childhood memories of watching them at the [Madison Square] Garden! One of our roadies had worked with Phil Lynott in Grand Slam, and I was so excited about that. So fuck yeah, I remember being here. I remember Malcolm Dome giving us a good review in *Kerrang!* We thought we'd made it.

The old cliché is that you've got your whole life to make your first album, and then, like, get six weeks to make your second one. Did your second, 7800° Fahrenheit, feel rushed? It didn't set the world on fire.

It didn't, but we did the best we could with our limited knowledge of any aspect of record making, and no great guidance from either the record company or management. Let's not be too harsh, it did okay – 750,000 record sales in America – so the curve was still going upwards.

Did you have to set your ego aside when you brought in songwriter Desmond Child for the next album, *Slippery When Wet*?

[Sighs deeply] Okay, let me clarify this again, which I've probably done about one hundred times already. I saw from afar Bryan Adams, who I considered a peer, break to a different level when he did a song [*It's Only Love* on 1984's *Reckless* album] with Tina Turner. I'd had four songs that had made the charts, none had the world on fire, but we were doing okay. So I was like: "Wait a minute, let's write a song

for someone else." I asked our A&R guy Derek Shulman, who was formerly the singer with Gentle Giant: "How do you go about this?" He says: "Adams is writing with a guy named Jim Vallance." I say: "Well, do you know people that do this?" He says: "I know a guy", and mentioned Desmond Child. Now remember, Desmond Child's only song at that time was [Kiss's 'disco' single] *I Was Made For Loving You*. He had two records of his own, which didn't do anything, but I knew his picture, because right outside the door of The Fast Lane dressing room there was a photo of a guy who looked like David Bryan, with curly blond hair, and three chicks. So we write [You Give Love A] *Bad Name*. All of us go: "This is too good to give to Loverboy." And a relationship began, and it changed all of our lives.

Is it true that Desmond Child and Richie literally begged you on their knees to record *Living On A Prayer*, because you didn't think it was all that special?

That's a bit exaggerated. I was like: "Oh, it's good, but..." To me, *Bad Name* had more of the anthemic, radio-friendly sound of the time, like Joan Jett's cover of *I Love Rock 'N' Roll*, or Robert Palmer's *Addicted To*

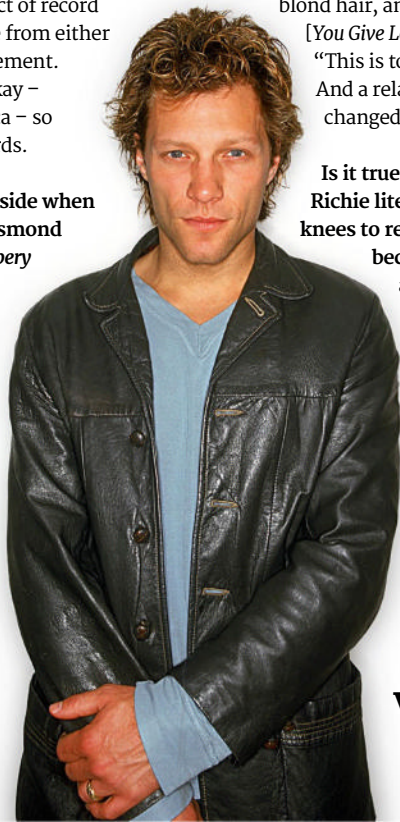
Boys just wanna have fun: JBJ (right) and Richie Sambora in 1993.



Love, or Twisted Sister's *We're Not Gonna Take It*. And I was like: "We need that." And you couldn't have heard that in the first demo we did.

The master stroke, it seemed to me, with *Slippery When Wet*, was those faked 'concert' videos for *You Give Love A Bad Name* and *Living On A Prayer*, because: a) the band looked fucking huge, and b) every single teenage boy in the world, this one included, was like: "Look at all those girls at that gig!"

[JBJ gives a thumbs up] Right? Look, if you were lucky enough to learn how to make a record, let alone write a hit song, that was amazing. But now they want to thrust you into this film business? Fuck that. We didn't know how to make a good video, but by the time we got to that third album we were smart enough to know that: a) we were very good live band, and b) we had to capture that on film. If you go back and look for the *Silent Night* promo twelve-inch, we've all got our fingers up to our lips, and it says: "The best-kept secret in rock and roll." Now it was time to let everyone in on that secret.



"We never had a fight, it wasn't about money, it wasn't about girlfriends, it wasn't about drugs. We were exhausted."

Still keeping the faith: JBJ in 1996.



Bon Jovi in 1995, without Alec John Such, who quit the band the previous year.

It worked. *Slippery When Wet* turned Bon Jovi into the biggest band in the world. Can you remember how that felt?

I remember my parents saying to me: "Now everybody knows your name." Until then, our parents would tell their friends: "My kid's in a band, and they have a record deal, and they're opening for Ratt at the Meadowlands Arena. Would you like to come?" *Slippery* comes, and that's the end of supporting anyone ever again in our lives. So that changed everything.

Did you feel like a rock star then?

I felt like a rock star in Raze! [laughs]

Then with *New Jersey* you did it all over again, and became even bigger. In the documentary, you mention that at that point you could just click your fingers and get anything that you wanted. So, if you'll excuse my French, what stopped you turning into a bit of a c*nt?

Each other... and *New Jersey*. And by *New Jersey* I mean more than just our neighbours, but our upbringing. I realised, touring with those West Coast bands and those arena-rock acts, and being on the same management roster as Mötley Crüe, that that wasn't what I aspired to be, as a behavioural pattern. We got lumped into that because we looked like the rest of them, as did all the kids in the malls at that time. But that's when I was very aware of: 'don't aspire to that, aspire for more, aspire to be different.'

In *Thank You, Goodnight* you mention that you were never into rock-star 'over-indulgence', because you'd had some bad experiences when you were younger.

Yeah, really naive stuff.

Like what?

Something as innocent as something that was laced into the pot. Because I didn't have the constitution for it. Which was wonderful, because I wasn't indulging the way others were.

Everyone was doing cocaine at that time.

And everything else.

Wasn't it difficult for you to sit on the sidelines?

No. I could have a few drinks and be happy. And I didn't feel the need to follow anybody. If that was what was going to endear me to a group of people, I just wasn't interested.

By the end of the *New Jersey* tour, in early 1990, everybody in the band was pretty frazzled, and things were fractious. Then you went on to your solo career. Did that feel liberating?

Yes. To get back to the joy of making

music, to try to figure out why we were confused, because... [in Bon Jovi] we never had a fight, it wasn't about money, it wasn't about girlfriends, it wasn't about drugs. We were exhausted, physically and mentally. So I go off and do [the soundtrack for *Young Guns II* [aka *Blaze Of Glory*], and it was liberating on a number of fronts, because: a) I proved that I knew how to do it, and b) I proved that I knew how to do it again – and not only again, but alone. It also introduced me to acting, which was hugely important to the next chapter of the band's success.

Did you think, even for a minute or two: "You know what, I'll stick with going it alone"?

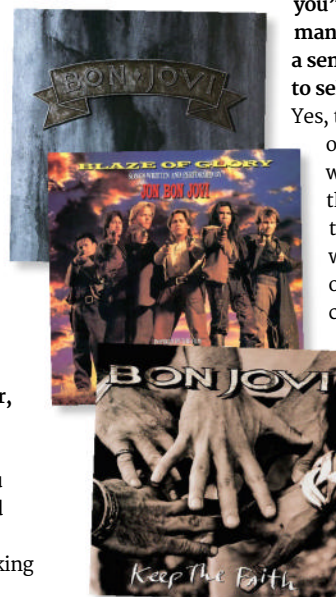
No, I did not. I only ever wanted to be with these guys. But after what is now six-to-seven years of being together twenty-four-seven, it was the same jokes, it was the same stories, it was the same meal, it was the same vacations together. You had every right to be exhausted and burned out and tired of each other. And Doc [McGhee, Bon Jovi's manager at the time] did us no favours. In retrospect I don't blame him, but he did us no favours if he was supposed to be the grown-up in the room. He should have said: "You guys are fucking exhausted." But they didn't, the collective agents, lawyers, managers.

The band's next album, in 1992, is *Keep The Faith*. Grunge has happened by then, even bands like U2 are changing their sound, and

you've decided to part ways with management and be a DIY band, in a sense. Was that album title a note to self as much as anything else?

Yes, to the collective 'we'. The audacity of us to tell the grunge world that we're just going to be independent, that we didn't want to be a part of the new fashionable thing, that we were going to just evolve, and do our own thing. And for me to convince those four guys that we didn't need not only Doc, but anyone else, was audacious.

You mentioned your acting career earlier. With that did you enjoy being a novice again, because you've walked into this other world where you're the new >





Blaze of glory: Richie Sambora and JBJ reunite at the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in 2018.



Jersey boys: JBJ and Bruce Springsteen at The Concert For Sandy Relief at NYC's Madison Square Garden, December 2012.

kid and you don't have the chops that other experienced actors do.

Well, I privately studied acting several days a week for two years before I even went to an audition. I didn't just walk in and have the audacity to say: "I know how to do this." But what it offered me, and what I brought back to the band... had we not had that, when I jumped off that cliff to self-management and cutting my hair off, was the humility of starting over again, at something else in the arts, with all the experience of super rock stardom. So those two things made for a very strong thirty-year-old version of me. I could go back to the band and say don't believe the hype from *Slippery*, don't believe the hype of *New Jersey*, don't believe that I'm doing anything different because of the success of *Blaze of Glory*. If we come back, humble and hungry, and all put our fucking hands in and say: "Okay, I get it", nobody's gonna believe in us more than we believe in us, and let's give this a shot.

By the time you started work on *What About Now* though, in 2012, Richie says he thought the band were getting stale.

I didn't think so, and the collective we didn't think so. I personally thought that everything was going incredibly fucking well. And it was never brought up in the room, or in the writing, or in the recording, or during the first twenty shows of that tour.

Obviously on a professional level, his exit mid-tour, on the day of a show in Calgary, threw you a curve ball. On a personal level did it hurt a bit too?

It was a shock. Nobody anticipated it, no one saw it coming. I talked to him the day before, I remember it so well. It was Easter Sunday, 2013, and I was driving through the Lincoln Tunnel as I was talking to him, because I was living in New York, and I was like: "Yeah, I'm feeling great, the album is gonna come in at Number One, see you up there." He said: "Can I stay home one more day?" "Of course. You want

to fly private tomorrow? Sure. Do it. I don't care. See you up there." And then the next day the phone rings at three in the afternoon, and, you know... "I can't go on."

In the documentary, there's a moment where the interviewer asks you: "How long did it take you to get over it?" And you say: "I'm still not over it, ten years later."

Sure. I'm heartbroken.

So what's to stop you bringing him back now?

How many times have you seen him in the last eleven years?

Well, none. But I was never expecting to run into him, to be fair.

I've talked to him twice.

Wow. Why?

[Slowly, as if explaining to a child] He. Quit. The. Band. I swear to Christ there was never a fight, nothing. David and Tico have talked to him once, at the [Rock And Roll] Hall Of Fame induction. He wasn't kicked out, he quit. And he hasn't made any great overtures about coming back.

Okay. Because I feel like that's not the public

perception. The public perception is that he's willing to go back, but...

But what? Life goes on. You have to get your reader to understand just one thing, because I'm as confused as anyone else was. If you or I commit to a job, and you don't show up for the job, people are going to be let down. The band were let down, that's something you can assume. Oh, and by the way, there's also a hundred and twenty guys waiting on a pay cheque on Friday. Oh, and then there's the fans that travelled to see this band, and bought tickets, hotels, flights. And there's the promoter that paid us the money to do a hundred shows... You've got responsibilities. So we went on. It was that simple.

You mentioned the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction. Your speech there had one of the all-time great intro lines, where you said something like: "I've written this speech in my head many times, and sometimes it's the 'Thank you' speech, and sometimes it's the 'Fuck you' speech." Did it sting that you were overlooked for so long by that institution, or by the Grammys committee?

Getting overlooked for Grammys is almost a badge of honour. The Beatles or Zeppelin or the Stones weren't getting any, but Beyonce has twenty-seven? They're not naturally drawn to rock bands. Whatever. And the Hall Of Fame is like an old white man's club, with a secret ballot. It was a little fiefdom. So no, it didn't sting that we were overlooked. We've had some of the biggest albums of all time, we can live without trophies.

Would you swap the sales of *Slippery* or *New Jersey* for the critical acclaim of Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska*?

No, no, no, no, no. Anything that's happened to us - the good, the bad and the indifferent - all the information that got me here today, I wouldn't trade that for anything.



Raise your hands: Bon Jovi at Wembley Stadium, June 21, 2019.



An extraordinary life to reflect on: Jon Bon Jovi in 2024.

In the documentary, you're very honest about the issues you've had with your voice. I saw you at Wembley Stadium in 2019, and, respectfully – you're Jon Bon Jovi and what do I know? – it didn't sound good. But later I went back and watched a video from that show on YouTube, with you singing *Always*, and what struck me was that you were really giving it everything. Everything.

You're quite self-critical, and you know when something's not as good as it could be. So to do that night after night, going on stage knowing you're not killing it, isn't that difficult?

It's so fucking hard. It's hardest thing I've ever had to deal with. Imagine knowing it's not working right, and you can't figure out why. It was tough.

How do you cope with that mentally?
It was fucking tough.

Did you have to do something like see a therapist to talk you through it?

One? [Laughs dryly]. You just have to hold on, and give it your all. So, Wembley 2019. Yes, it wasn't like it was in 2000 or 1995. Or any of the other times I played in that building. I knew that. I won't argue with you.

On a more positive note, 2020 was a very brave album, because lyrically it's the most politicised, or at least the most socially conscious, Bon Jovi album. Tackling subjects such as the murder of George Floyd, or immigration to the US, you must have known you were going to alienate a huge chunk of your fan base.

My job is not to pander. My job was simply to narrate. Artistically, that album was very fulfilling. I'm really proud of it.

To circle back to where we started, some of your lyrics on that album were like lyrics Springsteen might have written.

I take that as a compliment. It's good songwriting and it's good storytelling. At that time the world was shut down, and you and I are both home watching television and reading the papers, because that's all we've got, right? And so now I take on the role of narrator. As a songwriter, that's my job. So I write about George Floyd and

obstacles I've faced, but all these punches in the face that you take are what gets you to where you are.

And where you are now? Are you as happy now as you've ever been?

Am I happy? I'm very content with where I am in my life. It's all part of the journey. I'm definitely not the guy I was at twenty or thirty or forty, or even fifty. It all changes. I'm here as the Ghost Of Christmas Future to tell you that it all changes. So am I happy? Yeah, I'm really happy. In *Legendary* I sing: 'I got what I want, because I got what I need.' Which sounds simple, but it resonates. I'm talking about your family, your friends, God willing, your health, and that's a full-circle moment that I couldn't have said when I was twenty or thirty or forty. Where am I now? I found joy.

Speaking of statements, and of full circles, God forbid that a music journalist would read something into something that doesn't exist, but the combination of an album called *Forever*, and a career-spanning documentary titled *Thank You, Goodnight*, would seem to be the things one might write before writing *The End*. I hope that's not the case. And it's not my intention.

If it was to be the case, it's not a bad way to exit. *Forever* is a really strong album, and it's full of energy and joy and love from start to finish. Still got it, right? Still got it. 🎸

Forever is released on June 7 via EMI. *Thank You, Goodnight* is available now on Disney+

“I swear to Christ, there was never a fight, nothing. Richie wasn't kicked out of the band, he quit.”

I write about covid, and I write about guns, and I write about Trump...

How do you feel about the prospect of that man coming back to power?

You know, my job now is to stay out of the way and pray. It will be up to the electorate. I can only pray for the future of the world.

On the new Bon Jovi album *Forever*, there's a really good line on the song *Seeds*, where you sing: 'You don't have to fix what is broken, you only get better at coping', which is a very mature kind of reflection.

Yeah. We've talked today about the various



REALITY BITES

Chris Goss lit the fuse on the 90s stoner revolution, and worked with bands including Kyuss and QOTSA. Meanwhile, his band **Masters Of Reality** remain hardly known despite having made some truly great records.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Ginger Baker wasn't an easy man to deal with, but Chris Goss learned early on how to put his head in the tiger's mouth without getting it bitten clean off.

"It depended on your approach," Goss says of his relationship with the ex-Cream drummer. "Hit him at the wrong moment, and you're gonna get an acrid reaction. I knew when the right moments were available for me, and we got along wonderfully."

Baker was a member of Goss's band Masters Of Reality during the early 1990s, and played on their second album, 1992's psychedelic desert-blues jewel *Sunrise On The Sufferbus*. In the end, Baker stayed with Masters longer than he was in Cream. "Oh yeah," Goss says drily but fondly. "I heard that every day."

Baker isn't the only notable musician to have entered Goss's orbit in the past 35 years. He's the thread that connects much of modern American rock, working with everyone from Josh Homme, Dave Grohl and Rick Rubin to Scott Weiland, Mark Lanegan and honorary Americans The Cult. He helped spark the early 90s stoner revolution via his production work with Kyuss, and subsequently became a key part of the extended Queens Of The Stone Age family. He almost produced Nirvana, and definitely did produce *Gladiator* star Russell Crowe's long-forgotten rock album.

Yet despite all that, Goss remains a fringe figure. Masters Of Reality may be beloved by those who have heard them, but those who have heard them are in the minority. The Masters' career has been fitful, with brilliant records – six albums at the last count, the most recent of which was released in 2009 – followed by long periods in which the band have gone dark.

"I just directed it in whichever direction it went in," Goss says of his career. "And that's where it ended up."

It's 6am UK time when Goss calls from California, making it 10pm over there. "I can't shed these music hours," he says, his speaking voice as smooth and hypnotic as his singing voice. "I'm old and I still have them."

He's not old, though. He was born at the end of the 1950s and came of age during the dawn of the rock era. The Beatles, the Stones, Cream and Hendrix were his early guiding lights, later augmented by Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Aerosmith. Goss credits Zeppelin's

Jimmy Page with fostering his interest in magick and the esoteric.

"I wanted to know what he knew," he says. "And I stepped through that door. It blew my mind. I learned how to astral project, to leave my body at will. I learned the Luciferian concepts of shining light on the darkness. Once you go there, it changes your life for ever."

By his late teens, Goss was mixing it up on the New York scene, pinballing between punk meccas Max's Kansas City and CBGB, and disco hotspots such as Studio 54 and the Paradise Garage. Talking about it today, he makes the whole period sound electrifying.

"Oh, it was," he says. "Art, dope, the excitement of being in a place where the air was charged with music. You'd go out at midnight and just dive into the night. You didn't know where the fuck you'd end up. And I ended up in limousines, at parties, art galleries. The energy was palpable."

He'd been in bands before, but New York and its crazy matrix of creativity changed how he looked at music. "Not just emulating Aerosmith and Led Zeppelin," >

|||||
"Art, dope, the excitement of being in a place where the air was charged with music."



Masters Of Reality in 1993, then with the legendary Ginger Baker (right) on drums.

“[Rick Rubin]’s a ‘svengali’, so it was tortuous for me. I’m searching for bliss while I’m playing, and it wasn’t blissful making that record.”

he says. “Looking at it more like Picasso – anything’s possible.”

He put together the first line-up of Masters Of Reality way back in 1980, with guitarist Tim Harrington. They were a two-piece at the time, mixing electronics with heavy riffs and a drum machine; Kraftwerk-meets-Black Sabbath, maybe, or Nine Inch Nails years before Nine Inch Nails existed. Whatever they sounded like, it wasn’t a recipe for mainstream success. Not that that was the intention, then or now.

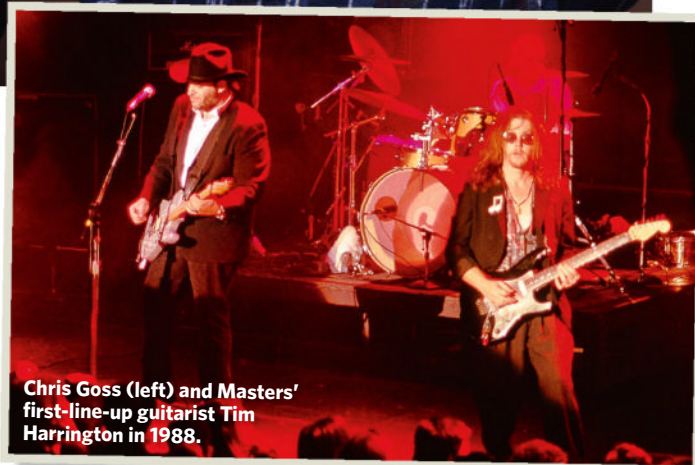
“I was a drunk at the time,” Goss says with a laugh, “so it was a wonderful way to get fucking shit-faced and also get paid.”

The two of them plugged away, playing the occasional gig in upstate New York. At one point, influential Chicago industrial label Wax Trax! – home of pipe-banging pioneers Ministry and Revolting Cocks – began sniffing around, but nothing came of it. Eventually Goss decided he “was tired of fucking around with a drum machine”, and decided to get a flesh-and-blood

drummer, for more spontaneity. The Masters transformed from an unconventional two-piece into a more conventional four-piece, albeit one with their own distinct identity. “I felt a pull back to where I came from,” he says. “I loved Kraftwerk, but I never let go of my love of Black Sabbath.”

And that’s how they carried on for a few more years, until one of their tapes landed in the lap of Rick Rubin. That’s when Masters Of Reality made one of the greatest cult debut albums in history. Except Chris Goss doesn’t quite see it like that.

When Rick Rubin signed Masters Of Reality to his label, Def American, in 1988, he was the hottest of music industry hotshots; he had launched the careers of hip-hop heavyweights Public Enemy, LL Cool J and The Beastie Boys. But Rubin was a rock fan, who put out Slayer’s controversial 1986 thrash-



Chris Goss (left) and Masters’ first-line-up guitarist Tim Harrington in 1988.

metal landmark *Reign In Blood* when other record companies blanched at the prospect.

Masters Of Reality’s self-titled debut album – colloquially known as *The Blue Garden*, thanks to its gothic-copse cover and majestic second track – sounded like nothing else at the time. This was stripped back blues-rock with an otherworldly edge, a dimension away from the pouting glam-metal pretty boys and biker-rock bozos clogging up MTV. As anyone who fell in love with the album at the time can vouch, it was a bona fide masterpiece.

Goss doesn’t see it like that. Today he talks about Rubin with barely concealed contempt. In his eyes, the producer stripped away the magic of Masters Of Reality, remoulding them as a bare-bones blues-rock band.

Master craftsman at work:
Chris Goss in 2008.



Goss and guest vocalist
Mark Lanegan at the
Astoria, London, during
Masters' Deep In The Hole
tour, December 2001.

"At first, Ginger rolled his eyes in that lovely pirate manner," says Goss. "But we jammed, and within two minutes his grin went from ear to ear. That jam lasted five hours. At the end, Ginger stood up and said: 'We should do something together, Chris.'"

Today, Goss talks about Baker with admiration and love. "We clicked like twin brothers from the moment we met," he says. The album they made, *Sunrise On The Sufferbus*, gave the Masters their biggest hit with the whirligig shuffle of *She Makes Me (When She Got Her Dress On)*. Baker's presence drew comparisons to Cream – inevitable, but incorrect and tiresome.

The end for this Masters Of Reality line-up came in early 1993, when they supported Alice In Chains in the US. The beery, flannel-clad rabble didn't want to see what Goss calls "old, fat-ish dudes" on stage. The feeling was mutual. "Ginger was repulsed even by the name of the band," says Goss. "He just didn't give a fuck."

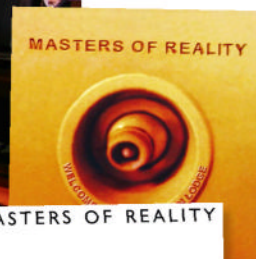
The final straw came when Alice In Chains singer Layne Staley OD'd and the tour was cancelled. "When Ginger got back home, he called me and said: 'Chris, I can't do this shit any more,'" says Goss.

The two men stayed in touch. When Baker died in 2019, Goss fronted the band that played a tribute gig at hallowed London jazz club Ronnie

Scott's, playing Eric Clapton's Cream guitar parts while Clapton himself looked on. "No pressure, then," he says, laughing. Then he's serious. "I miss him very much."

Baker's departure meant Goss had to rebuild MOR all over again. He spent a year

in LA's most expensive studios recording an album, *The Ballad Of Jody Frosty*. Goss's label – "beady-eyed creeps" – complained that they didn't hear any singles, and by the way, Goss owed them £492,000. But a contractual snafu on the label's part meant that he could walk away without having to repay the debt, although the album was shelved. ➤



"Here's the biggest producer in the world at the time, saying: 'I want to dry up your sound,'" he says. "It was like a dare – a dare I regret making. Because that first album sounded nothing like we sounded live. He picked out the bluesiest, most fucking Americana part of what we did and emphasised that. We had a lot of goth in us before that. He took away the purple fog. And I like the purple fog."

"He's a 'svengali'," Goss continues, the word dripping with irony. "So it was tortuous for me. I'm searching for bliss while I'm playing, and it wasn't blissful making that record. What came out of the speakers was a Masters Of Reality I'd never heard before. A lot of our close friends heard our record and their body language was devastating. They were saying: 'This man ruined you.'"

For Goss's part, he says there are remnants of what he wanted to sound like on the album – on the kaleidoscopic *The Blue Garden*, the swirling *John Brown* and the malevolent psychedelia of album closer *Kill The King*.

"The masterworks on the record," as he describes them. "If you added more keyboards and more reverb and echo and mysticism to it all, you would have gotten the real fucking thing."

The album was released in January 1989.

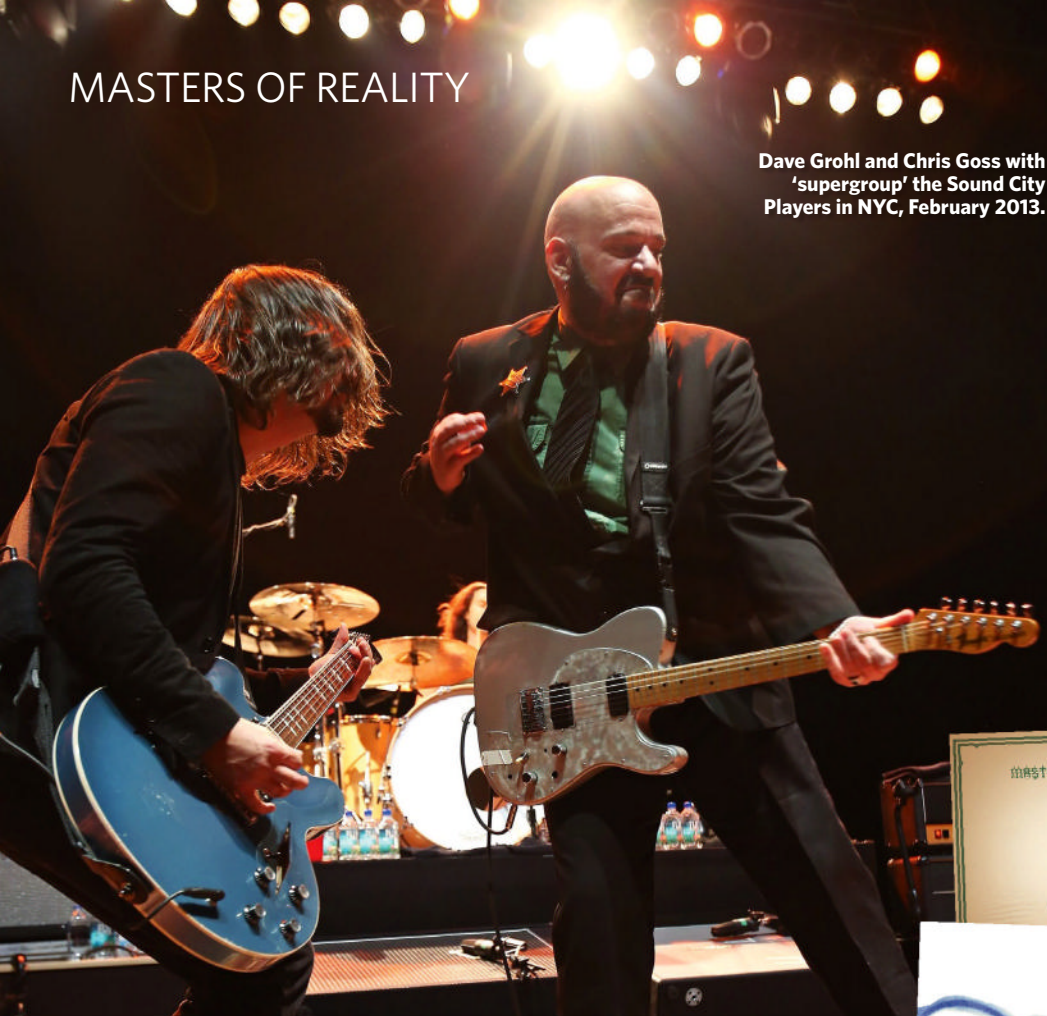
Despite Goss's issues with the record, a few of the savvier sections of the media recognised its brilliance. The public less so: the track *The Blue Garden* got a few MTV plays, but Masters Of Reality were a bunch of gnarly-looking dudes in their early 30s at a time when bands were judged by the frothiness of their tunes and the glossiness of their manes, and *Masters Of Reality* failed to trouble the charts.

It was all a moot point anyway. "There was a hatred between two factions, which Rubin thrived on," says Goss. "He loved that shit."

Within a year of releasing the debut album, the line-up that recorded it had fallen apart. When they resurfaced a couple of years later, it was with an unexpected new member: Ginger Baker.

Of all things, it was polo that brought Goss and Baker together. The drummer was an avid player, and so was Goss's manager at the time. The latter suggested Baker jam with Masters Of Reality.

**"I loved Kraftwerk,
but I never let go of
my love of Black
Sabbath."**



Dave Grohl and Chris Goss with 'supergroup' the Sound City Players in NYC, February 2013.

When Masters Of Reality finally re-emerged, it was with 1999's *Welcome To The Western Lodge* album. It felt like Goss had poured all his hopelessness and anger into the record. The title of the opening track said it all: *It's Shit*.

"It was made in hell," he says of the album. "Ten years of being fucked over by the music industry. I wanted to make a dark version of side two of *Abbey Road*. It's a fucked-up little record."

By this point Goss had long abandoned any expectations of commercial success – "Commercial? Come on..." he snorts – although that didn't stop him following up *Western Lodge* in relatively short order with 2001's *Deep In The Hole*. But any momentum they had built was derailed in 2004 when Goss nearly died after contracting an infection while in hospital.

"Within one day, my organs began to shut down," he says. He spent 13 days in a coma.

"I was travelling in the astral world. It was magic."

He spent a month in critical care in hospital, and it took him several more months to recover at home. Even then, he was hooked up to an intravenous line, and had a nurse visiting him daily.

By 2006 he was finally well enough to release a new album, *Give Us Barabbas*, with songs recorded a decade earlier for the shelved *Ballad Of Jody Frosty* album.

Goss recovered, but since then there

has been just one more Masters Of Reality album, 2009's knotty but beguiling *Pine/Cross Dover*. He says the radio silence, studio-wise, was partly down to him ("I needed a vacation") and partly down to the changed landscape of the music industry. "There's a lot of fucking fear out there," he

says. "I can't work with that. You cannot make fearful music."

The good news is that Goss is working on a new album right now (by the time you read this there'll be a single, *Sugar*, out via Mascot

Records). It's "three quarters" done, he says, but sciatica is slowing him down. "I was standing in the studio, trying to sing, and my legs would go numb," he says. "I had to sit down. It's the first time it's happened to me in my life."

I'm dealing with this bullshit."

For a man who has spent large chunks of his career dealing with bullshit of one kind or another, Goss is sanguine about how it has all played out. He insists he wouldn't change anything, except maybe he'd have liked a better quality of touring life: "The only thing I would have appreciated about being in a huge band is five-star hotels and First Class travel."

And while he's been a hostage to record labels and producers before, that's not been his style for a long, long time.

"I'm not at the mercy of the music industry," he says. "They're at the mercy of me." ●



Goss wasn't too worried. He'd parlayed his fleeting status as Rick Rubin's "golden boy" into production work. The first band he hooked up with were Palm Desert four-piece Kyuss. He'd fallen in love with them after his wife played a cassette of theirs incessantly. The first time he saw them was at some tiny bar in Los Angeles.

"They were tuned down lower than anyone I'd heard," he says. "It was a liquid lava that moved slowly but aggressively forward. It bowled me over. I made it a creed not to let another producer touch them, because they would have just fucked it up."

The holy triumvirate of Kyuss albums that Goss produced – 1992's *Blues For The Red Sun*, 1994's *Welcome To Sky Valley* and 1995's *...And The Circus Leaves Town* – became the foundation stones for the 1990s stoner rock movement. Years later, Dave Grohl told him that Nirvana had considered him to produce the follow-up to *Nevermind*.

"I was like: 'Gee, thanks for telling me now, Dave,'" says Goss. "They used to listen to Masters Of Reality and Kyuss in their van. But I don't know."

I would have wanted to fuck their sound up."

Goss did just fine without them. When Kyuss split and their guitarist Josh Homme launched Queens Of The Stone Age, Goss was by his side as a mentor/guru/musical foil. During the 90s he was involved in albums by QOTSA, Stone Temple Pilots, The Flys (whose Goss-produced debut album *Holiday Man* went gold in the US) and Russell Crowe's barroom rock 30 Odd Foot Of Grunts, whose sole album, 1998's *Gaslight*, he produced.

"He charmed me into it," Goss says of the latter. "I'd go into the control room, and there's a bar set up with different kinds of top-shelf

liquor and a buffet. He assumed that was the lifestyle I was living [laughs]. If only he knew. I saw a work ethic with Russell like I'd never seen in my life before. He'd be on a movie set until midnight, then back in the studio, then back on the set at six a.m. the next morning."

Goss himself was doing well out of it, making "forty or fifty thousand dollars" per album. He even wrote music for the cult cartoon show *Ren & Stimpy*. He'd bought a house in the desert outside LA, and built his own studio there. There was the occasional Masters Of Reality show – one of them, at the Viper Room in LA, featuring a guest appearance by Stone Temple Pilots singer Scott Weiland, was

"The only thing I would have appreciated about being in a huge band is five-star hotels and First Class travel."

recorded and released the 1997 live album *How High The Moon*.

But the Masters had largely gone dark again, and so had Goss. After Baker's departure he'd been hit by a bout of serious depression, something which he's dealt with periodically ever since. He credits the author William Styron, whose book *Darkness Visible*, about his own struggle with depression, helped him find a way out of the darkness. "What I learned from him is that it's like being in a storm at sea, in a little boat," Goss says. "You're so sure you're gonna fucking die, and it's terrifying, but it calms. I just want people to know that."

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POP JUNKIES

Delivering catchy punky power-pop, and having put an end to booze-and-drug-fuelled days-after-the-night-before, **Bad Nerves** are heading for more than just big-name support slots.

Words: **Polly Glass**

It's 4pm on a Thursday. We're sitting outside at The Starman, a Bowie-themed watering hole in central London, tucked away from the shopping bags and tourist streams of Regent Street. It's a cool spot, Bobby Bird – shades off, shandy in hand – is expounding on a subject close to his heart.

"Most people are afraid to be *cheesy*, you know?" the Bad Nerves frontman exclaims between swigs. "But cheesy melodies, if you package them right, they're the best ones because you remember them. There's loads of bands now that I really like, they have a nice vibe, but I don't remember the songs. I like having something stuck in my head. It's like, how catchy can you go, before it becomes almost annoying?"

The 35-year-old doesn't fuck around with songs. His band have a scrappy aesthetic, but at heart it's on-point power pop; fun yet tender, fizzing with the intoxication of love, lust and living. And most of it comes in two-minute packages, although their second album *Still Nervous* has some longer moments.

Lately Bad Nerves have enjoyed the sort of hot streak nailed by few rock bands these days. Corey Taylor is a fan. Radio 1 are fans. Billie Joe Armstrong called them "the best new band in England right now". In the past six months they picked up virtually every desirable support slot going, including The Hives, The Struts, Royal Blood, Nothing But Thieves, The Darkness on their *Permission To Land* tour, and Guns N' Roses in Hyde Park. They played pretty much every city in the UK, theatres across America, enormodomes in Europe, festivals left right and centre.

"It's not an enviable life for our girlfriends," Bird says, laughing nervously, "because we're not there, ever. We got home December 23. Me and Mike, our producer, went straight from the tour bus to the studio, had Christmas Day off, the next day I went to his and didn't leave until January 28... And then we went on tour for another month."

Part pop junkie, part punk rocker, Bird is friendly company, more chatty Essex boy than aloof London hipster in his black coat, earrings and 'Hellraiser' T-shirt (the latter nicked from his girlfriend). Not to mention fresh-faced

for someone who's been touring solidly since September 2023.

Our location today feels fitting. Back home in Colchester, Bird grew up listening to his father's Bowie records in the car on the way to school. As a teenager he fell in love with the fiery heaviness of Slipknot. Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* made him want to play drums. All the while, pop music – from The Beatles to Andrew Lloyd Webber – was never far away.

"My mum's a secondary-school music teacher, and I used to go to loads of musicals with her," he enthuses, "*Starlight Express*, all of them. I've seen *Les Mis* about five times in the West End."

After various doomed metal and indie bands, Bird decided to bottle this adolescent diet of sugar and spittle. Joined by guitarists Will Phillipson and George Berry, drummer Sam Thompson and bassist Jon Poulton (all from other Essex and East London bands) around 2016, he ditched the drums and took up singing. They clicked over pop and

"Most of the music videos we did, we were fked up. It was a party."**

Bobby Bird

punk stars like Ramones and The Clash, The Beatles and early Supergrass.

Chiefly it's the punk side that shines through their 'branding'. It gives them an edge, an allure. People want to wear their T-shirts as well as binge on their songs. Until recently this came with a fast, furious but essentially wordless stage show. All that changed when Bird watched The Hives' Pelle Almqvist and The Darkness' Justin Hawkins in action.

"I'm watching and thinking: 'God, this is so much more fun,'" he says. "For the first years, we'd go on stage, deadpan, doing this whole serious thing. When I see bands doing that now, I see how much it doesn't work. People want to connect with you."

Inspired by the on-stage and off-stage conduct of their headliners (some of them recovering addicts), Bad Nerves resolved to keep themselves

as consistently match-fit as possible. They drank sparingly. They all quit smoking. The shows got better and better.

In the beginning, conversely, Bad Nerves were a party band. Having formed in their twenties, they gigged in pubs. Hazes of booze and substances hung over them, often not lifting for days. The music came second, Bird admits.

"You start partying with friends, and then if you have an addictive personality you just want to do it on your own. Before you know it, you're sitting in a room for days straight. Like when we did [debut LP] *Bad Nerves*, most of the music videos we did, we were fucked up. It was a party. It was a laugh. But then you get to nearly thirty and go: 'Fucking hell, what have I done? I've forgotten how to have fun without it being something where I can't function for days after.'"

For Bird, who grew up with addicts among his friends and relatives, it was all a bit close to home. "Half my family are alcoholics. I see what it does, and it fucks people up so badly. You do it without thinking. My mum and dad are lucky, they've been very clean living, but I lived with my uncle [at one point] and he was just a tortured soul."

In the end, lockdown forced them all to concentrate on music. Bird found himself having fun, *real* fun, writing songs. Bad Nerves released their self-titled debut album in 2020, and gathered waves of fans who wondered why more people hadn't heard these absurdly catchy, life-affirming songs. As restrictions eased, the band played their first headline tour. Everything started to go right.

With *Still Nervous* now imminent, their gig calendar is still filling up. Bird dreams of writing with metal bands. He's done video work for Suzi Quatro, and now for Justin Hawkins's popular YouTube channel. Out of financial necessity, he moved back in with his mum.

He hasn't looked back.

"I will never do anything else. Life is brief. You've got to do what you want to do, even if you have to live at your mum's house. There is a satisfaction in pursuing things you enjoy, even if it's a struggle. It's part of the adventure." 🍷

Still Nervous is out on May 31 via Lowly/Suburban Records.





BAD BLOOD AND **BURIED**

After a slow start, by the end of the 70s Canadian trio **Triumph** were living up to their name. Then came the falling-out, the split, and 20 years of toxicity before they shared a stage again.

Words: **James McNair**



HATCHETS

When Triumph re-formed briefly to play 2008's Sweden Rock festival, there was just one problem: they'd barely spoken to each other in 20 years. Collecting gongs at an awards ceremony had brought the Canadian power trio back into each other's orbit, but now Rik Emmett (guitar), Mike Levine (bass) and Gil Moore (drums) had to unpick a Gordian knot of bad blood and hurt.

"Initially it was awkward as shit," Emmett tells *Classic Rock* today, at home in Burlington, near Lake Ontario. "We met at a coffee shop, with a mediator, and he was like: 'If you guys can bury the hatchet, I can get you into the [Canadian Music] Hall Of Fame.'"

"But the big catalyst for me was that my younger brother Russell had died in 2007," Emmett continues. "Just before he passed, he said to me: 'Rik, nobody in the world is a bigger Triumph fan than me, and I would love to see you guys back together.' I thought: 'You son of a bitch, Russell! You're dying of cancer, and now I have to try this!'"

As documented in Banger Films' 2021 biopic

"Triumph were friends too, but it was more of a business relationship."

Rik Emmett

Triumph: Rock & Roll Machine, Emmett had broken his bandmates' hearts when, seeking new musical challenges, he left in 1988. Burying that hatchet wouldn't be easy. "Each of us had grown to believe our own anger and bitterness," he says. "Then you think: 'That's fuckin' stupid. Let it go.' Pretty soon it was as if we were on the road in Iowa again, just hanging out and cracking jokes."

Sweden Rock, meanwhile, proved great fun. And when Brian Robertson, formerly of Thin Lizzy, approached Emmett to tell him how much he liked Strung Out Troubadours, Emmett's 2006-formed guitar duo with fellow Canadian Dave Dunlop, high jinks ensued.

"This big sweaty German guy had interrupted us really rudely with about fifteen albums to sign," a smiling Emmett says. "Then later on Robertson noticed him asleep on a couch in our hotel lobby, and he goes: [decent Scots accent] 'I'm gonna get that fucker!' So the German guy's snoring, and Brian sneaks up and writes 'C*NT' on his forehead with a sharpie. Poetic justice!"

Prior to Triumph forming in Mississauga, Ontario in 1975, Mike Levine and Gil Moore had played in a less succinctly named group. When Abernathy Shagnaster's Wash And Wear Rock & Roll Band imploded, the ambitious pair decided to form a trio, and began scouting for the perfect foil. Blonde, square-jawed, a noted and versatile guitar-hero-about-town, Rik Emmett was in King Crimson and Gentle Giant-influenced prog band Act III at the time. Like Moore, he also had a great high-register voice, and they would go on to share lead vocals.

Levine's recording engineer background and Moore's long-standing PA-hire business



(Clockwise) Rick Emmett, Mike Levine and Gil Moore with Triumph in the late 70s/early 80s.



showed their enterprise, and by the time they head-hunted Emmett they had somehow secured a sizeable Attic Records' advance, which they waved under the guitarist's nose. Emmett, still living with his parents, needed the dosh so that he and his girlfriend could rent somewhere together. He threw in his lot with the sharp-talking Levine and Moore, and Triumph was born.

From the outset, they put the 'show' into 'showbiz'. Moore knew all about pyrotechnics – "Triumph would come to your town and blow shit up!" Skid Row's Sebastian Bach has said – and used aircraft landing lights to bring early classic *The Blinding Light Show* to life. Moore would also hype up audiences with statements of intent. The very hirsute Levine, Emmett recalls, "looked biblical", while Emmett himself, often shrink-wrapped in white or red Spandex, had ice-hockey pads on for protection. "I'd injured my right knee in high school playing [American] football," he says, "so I needed the pads when I was doing my Pete Townshend power-slides across the stage."



On the record front, things weren't initially so spectacular. 1976's *In The Beginning* and 1977's *Rock & Roll Machine* didn't do that much to distinguish Triumph from party

hearty also-rans. But by 1979's *Just A Game*, Emmett's writing in particular had become much more sophisticated. Rich in layered vocal harmonies, Triumph's fine, gold-selling breakthrough took a year to

make, and its title track called out the music industry's ivory-tower dwellers. In the US and Canada, two more Emmett-written gems – *Lay It On The Line* and *Hold On* – quickly became drive-time radio faves.

Gil Moore's straight-ahead rocker *American Girls* was great too, but its 'I know how to treat

a lady, who knows how to treat her man' sentiments were more crotch than cranium. Emmett was no prude, and liked an American girl as much as the next guy, but he also sought purpose in life.

"I would look at people going apeshit at our concerts and think: 'What are we offering them?' If we're going to be called Triumph, we need to give them some inspiration, something positive. When I wrote *Hold On* it was like: 'Okay, maybe this is why I'm doing this. Maybe I can write songs that make people feel better about themselves.'"

It was this compassionate streak that led Triumph to be seen as "the good guys in an era meant for dirtbags", as celebrity fan Danko Jones



Crowd pleasers: Triumph at County Stadium, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 1982.



Plenty to smile about in 1981: (l-r) Rik Emmett, Gil Moore, Mike Levine.

put it, recalling Triumph playing to 300,000 metal fans at 1983's massive US Festival in San Bernardino, California. Dressed all in white that day, Triumph seemed to be the angelic antithesis of such celebrated dirtbags as Mötley Crüe, who were also on the three-day bill.

The perception that Triumph's music was fairly wholesome – unlikely to contain backwards-masked messages advocating devil worship – was further cemented by another brilliant Emmett song from 1981's *Allied Forces*. *Fight The Good Fight* mentioned 'The good book', while its altruistic, 'take courage' message was manna for Triumph fans facing all kinds of adversity. The song also suggested that Emmett might be a man of faith, a believer. True?

"My mom was a very religious person," he

my mom. I was her golden boy, singing first soprano in the church choir. My aunt Joan was actually dying of cancer when I wrote that song, and we talked about St Paul saying to The Corinthians you gotta fight the good fight. But my take on that was that it needn't necessarily be a religious thing.

"These days I'm a secular humanist," Emmett sums up, "but I still believe the human spirit is a very powerful thing. Question is, are we going to use it like Putin uses it, or are we gonna use it like, say, Nelson Mandela used it?"

"We were a glitzy act with lasers. People went wild for that in America, but in the UK it seemed a little too much."

Rik Emmett

says. "I was steeped in Christianity until I was about twelve, then I thought: 'Wait a sec. I'm not buying into this idea of the Resurrection and an afterlife – I don't want to be a hypocrite.'

"When I opted out it caused a big fall-out with

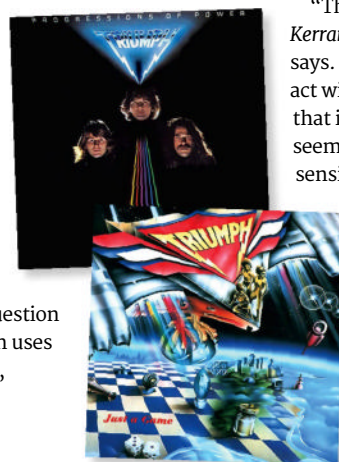
By *Allied Forces*, Triumph were huge. They'd also made it over to the UK in support of their previous album, 1980's *Progressions Of Power*. That album's *I Live For The Weekend* remains the perfect precursor to Friday-night revelry. It was also Triumph's first and only UK-charting single, peaking at No.59.

This writer saw them at Glasgow Apollo that November for a thrilling night of retina-scorching spectacle. But Emmett's memory of the tour is that they didn't quite translate.

"The critics kind of hated us, and *Kerrang!* gave us a bad review," he says. "We were a glitzy North American act with lasers. People went wild for that in America, but in the UK it seemed a little too much for some sensibilities [laughs]."

There was also the matter of that 'other' Canadian power trio. Triumph were endlessly compared to Rush, and Emmett understood why, but really, the two bands were very different animals.

"I think Triumph were ➤





"Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" The reunited Triumph at the Sweden Rock Festival in 2008.

HANS MARTIN ISSLEHONCK/REX

reaching for the charts more," says Emmett. "We worried less about recreating what we did in the studio when we played live. Rush were also more tight as friends, I think. Geddy and Alex had known each other since school, and in Neil they found a guy who shared their artistic vision. Triumph were friends too, of course, but it was more of a business relationship.

"I suppose the slight irritation that remains for me is that Rush were so huge and so unique that you just couldn't compete with them," Emmett adds. "Also, Rush had a fourth guy: their manager, Ray Danniels, whereas we managed ourselves, and that was always going to lead to problems."

Prior to 1984's *Thunder Seven*, a contractual dispute with RCA records resulted in Triumph buying out of their deal for three million dollars and releasing the album on MCA. *The Sport Of Kings* (1986) wasn't plain sailing, either, with intra-band relations having deteriorated to the point that Triumph weren't writing together. Accordingly, producer Ron Nevison was hired to try the 'lets bring in outside writers' approach that had been so fruitful when he produced Heart's 1985 Top 10 smash *What About Love*.

"Ron wanted me to sing the songs," recalls Emmett, "but Gil was like: 'What? That's not gonna happen in my band.' I agreed with Ron, and felt that as the voice behind *Lay It On The Line* and *Magic Power* I was our best shot at getting back on radio, but that was never going to fly given band politics at the time."

Pretty soon, Nevison was sacked from the project, and production of *The Sport Of Kings* was credited to Mike Clink and Thom Trumbo.

Triumph limped on for 1987's *Surveillance* before Emmett

jumped ship – "I knew we were going nowhere fast and I had to get out," he says of the whole debacle. Levine and Moore then made the group's 1992's swan song *Edge Of Excess* with (then) hip young shredder Phil X, later of Bon Jovi.

Even today, Rik Emmett is careful to take care of business. After many minutes of Triumph chat, he briefly steers his

"Pretty soon it was as if we were on the road in Iowa again, just hanging out and cracking jokes."

Rik Emmett on the reunion

conversation with *Classic Rock* towards his excellent new solo compilation *Diamonds: The Best Of The Hard Rock Years 1990-1995*, stating, not unreasonably, that "this is the reason you and I are talking today".

Now 70, he's in the process of putting radiation treatment for prostate cancer behind him. He also has arthritis in his hands, he says. "And that's tricky, because it's really cramping my style both literally and metaphorically."

Following his time in Triumph, Emmett's career opened up into broader, more imaginative channels. He made solo albums that explored jazz, folk, flamenco, and swing music as well as rock. He started writing for *Guitar Player*, was a cartoonist for *Hit Parader* magazine, and taught songwriting and music business at Toronto's Humber College.

Emmett's 2021 poetry collection *Reinvention*, meanwhile, marked him out as a guitar hero with different sensibilities to, say, Ted Nugent, and he has a second volume, *Leaning Into It*, on the way. "But the poetry is a bit like when I release a jazz record," he says, smiling. "You're immediately shrinking possible sales down to the smallest possible demographic."

He also published his memoir, *Lay It On The Line*, last year. "I was never in it for the sex and drugs..." he writes at one point, again shrinking his demographic, but the book's still a fine read. What did he learn about himself while writing it?

"Maybe that for all the showbiz bullshit that's gone down in my life, I adhere to a philosophy of humility more than anyone might imagine, while watching old footage of me in Spandex!" he says, laughing.

Now Emmett pauses, something occurring to him. "I remember meeting one of my heroes, Chet Atkins, in Nashville in 1979. A genius guitarist, obviously, but also the A&R guy who signed Elvis to RCA, and you can't beat that. He was lovely, very humble. I thought: 'When I grow up I want to be like Chet.'"



Hatchets buried: the Triumph trio in the 2021 biopic *Triumph: Rock & Roll Machine*.

Rik Emmett's *Diamonds: The Best Of The Hard Rock Years 1990-1995* is out now via *Deko Entertainment*.

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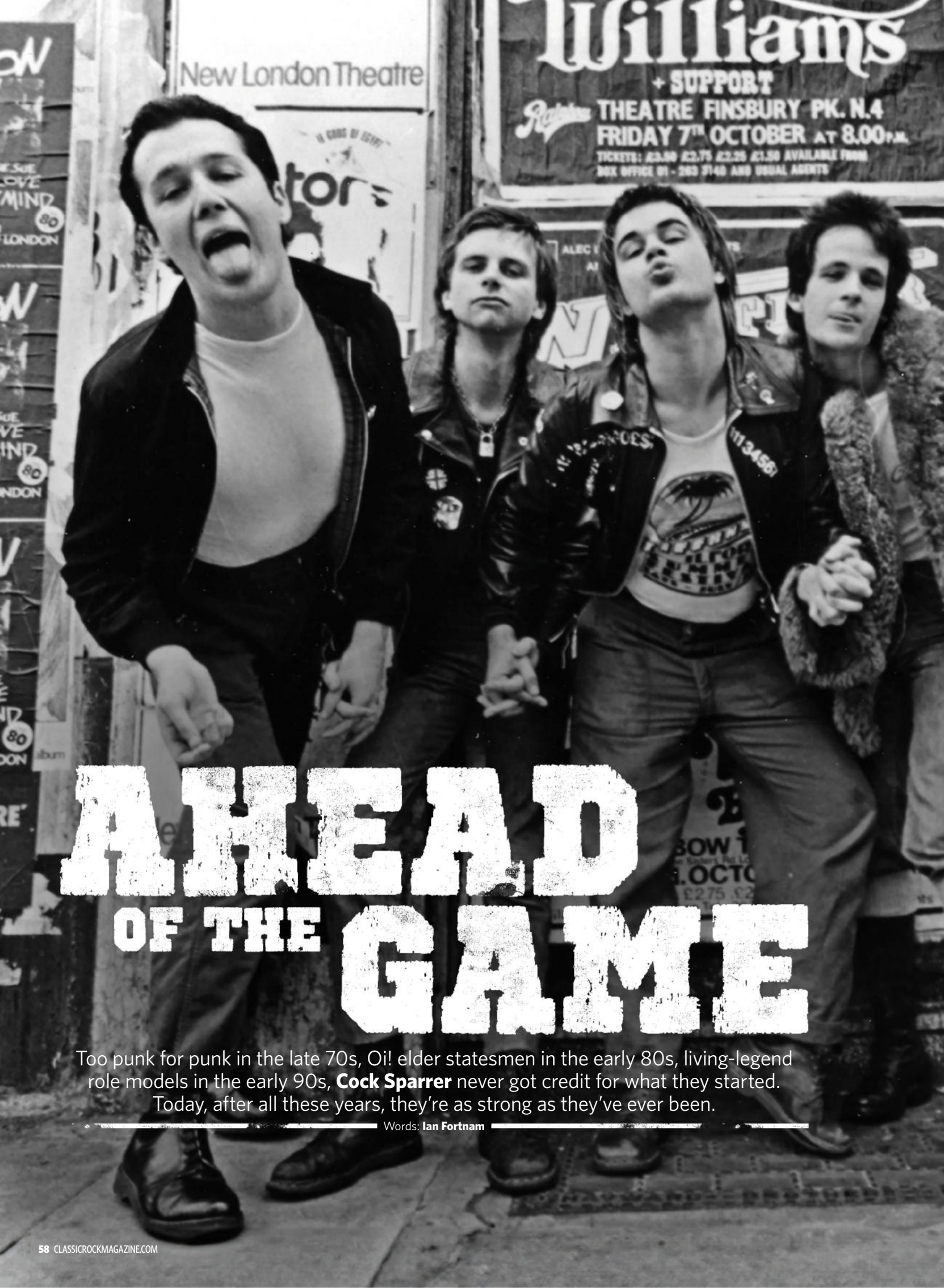
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AHEAD OF THE GAME

Too punk for punk in the late 70s, Oi! elder statesmen in the early 80s, living-legend role models in the early 90s, **Cock Sparrer** never got credit for what they started. Today, after all these years, they're as strong as they've ever been.

Words: **Ian Fortnam**



Cock Sparrer, an East End London street-punk institution, with a core quartet of members who've been together since 1972, have never been more in demand than they are right now. According to their imposing, stentorian lead vocalist Colin McFaull, they have enjoyed a career in reverse. "Maybe bands in future will follow our model," he says, "shun big record deals to follow their own path; leave big gaps every few years... Not make any money out of it."

In 1977, Cock Sparrer's faces (in the eyes of a music industry and press already blind-sided by a spike-topped, McLaren-marketed, hippie-averse new order) simply didn't fit. They looked like they'd just walked off the terraces. They were *actually* working class. Their music a shade too brutal, their hair a couple of grades too cropped, Cock Sparrer were just *too* punk.

Maybe, because they'd already been hard at it for five years and had honed their brand of sonic aggravation closer to the bone than anyone else (until Sparrer-indebted Oi! arrived on the fringes of the mainstream in '81), they were simply too far ahead of the game.

So while they couldn't get arrested (actually, poor analogy, they very much *could* get arrested) in 1977, by 1982 they'd been embraced as underground elder statesmen by a never-more-receptive domestic punk scene. By the early 90s they were being held up as living-legend role models by such leading lights of the US crossover hardcore scene as The Dropkick Murphys and Rancid.

'Their music a shade too brutal, their hair a couple of grades too cropped, Cock Sparrer were just *too* punk.'

When Cock Sparrer (né Sparrow) started out – with a core line-up (then as now) of singer McFaull, guitarist Mickey Beaufoy, bassist and songwriter Steve Burgess and drummer Steve Bruce – their musical role models were local heroes and mod godheads the Small Faces, along with the glam stars of the day: Slade, T.Rex, Roxy Music, Bowie, Mott, Alice Cooper. Their ambitions were modest: "We'd copy songs that were in the charts to try and pull a few birds down the youth club, but it didn't always work out, obviously."

Four years on, it became apparent from reading music press reports that they were not alone in touting crop-haired, glam/mod-based, short, sharp and aggressive shocks. Something similar was rumbling up west. And in the summer of '76 a visit was made to Chelsea's King's Road to deliver a demo cassette to Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren.

"We said: 'Have a listen to this, this is the real stuff', and arranged for him and one of his guys to come and see us rehearsing over a pub in the East End," recalls McFaull. "When they turned up they had on bondage trousers, cowboy hats, spurs on their boots, and we were in jungle greens and Dr Martens. It was like the King's Road meets the Army & Navy store. We played a couple of our terrible compositions, and though nothing was said, you could tell it was 'not really for us'."

Although invited to stay for a beer, McLaren – unforgivably – left without offering to stand his round.

Undeterred, Sparrer simply soldiered on: "We just circled the wagons and cracked on, still in the belief that something might come of it."

And as punk exploded rapidly, something did come of it. Sparrer signed to Decca Records ("One of our managers also looked after John Miles, who'd just had a big hit on Decca with *Music*, so us signing with them seemed like a shoo-in") and went on to release their debut single *Running Riot* in May '77.

Unfortunately, Decca were not the ideal punk label – they were more used to dealing with classical artists (other punk-era ➤



Lip-synching: too punk for punk in the 70s.

signings they spectacularly failed to launch included Slaughter & The Dogs and even Adam And The Ants, who ultimately hit mainstream pay dirt with CBS).

While Decca had little clue what to do with their lively charges (their second single, a cover of the Rolling Stones' *We Love You* – in a picture-free white sleeve – didn't arrive until November, and a six-month gap between releases in '77 was roughly equivalent to six years now), the band didn't exactly help matters.

"We were antagonistic and unhelpful," McFaul admits. "That's why *We Love You* came out in a white cover. Every design they threw at us, we said: crap, we're not having it."

"Decca weren't a good match for us. They weren't stupid, they just weren't in tune with what was going on. Badges were very important in those days. The cool ones, for the Pistols and the Clash, were tiny. Ours were massive, like the ones that come with birthday cards."

Their self-titled debut album was finally released in 1978. But only in Spain. Meanwhile, they'd picked up a reputation for trouble.

"There was some violence at the gigs," says McFaul, "but it wasn't anything we generated. We had a regular following of about a dozen lads, known as The Poplar Boys, but they were more responsible for stopping fights than starting them. We stopped playing for a while because we weren't interested in anything where someone might get hurt. Every gig, the van's windscreen got smashed or the tyres were slashed. We just thought we don't need this."

Cock Sparrer split, for the first time, in '78 and simply got on with their lives. They got married, got jobs, but remained close, "a band of brothers". Meanwhile, Oil (an unvarnished brand of hard-core street punk championed by Garry Bushell in weekly music paper *Sounds*, and defined by a series of compilation

albums – featuring tracks by, the now tantalisingly absent, Cock Sparrer) appeared on the scene in 1981, sparking the interest of a whole new generation of fans and spurring Cock Sparrer back into action.

In '82 they recorded their second, most enduring album, *Shock Troops*, and remained in harness for *Running Riot In '84*, before ultimately calling a halt to proceedings once more.

During their next eight years of near stasis,

"Every gig, the van's windscreen got smashed or the tyres were slashed. We just thought we don't need this."

Colin McFaul

Steve Bruce opened a couple of pubs, ending up at The Stick Of Rock on Bethnal Green Road, playing host to a number of gigs in the early 90s. Guitarist Daryl Smith "was a fan who used to play with his band The Elite at Steve's pub," recalls McFaul. "Steve was working behind the bar, and when people found out who he was there was almost a reverence."

"I used to drag him up on stage," says Smith (now Sparrer's rhythm guitarist of 32 years



Today's Sparrer: still fiercely and proudly independent.

standing). "People couldn't believe it. We were like: 'A real live human member of Cock Sparrer?'" There

were never any photos of them from back in the day, they were like mythical creatures."

Inevitably, the nagging for the band to re-form resumed, but Sparrer – completely oblivious to just how much their legend had grown in their absence – were sceptical.

"We were approached by this guy who wanted to put us on at the Astoria," says McFaul, "and we were like: 'What's the point? No one will come.' We didn't want him to lose money, he was a nice bloke, so we agreed to do it for a couple of hundred quid. We were expecting tumbleweed, two men and a dog, but it was a brilliant night, sold out. Because what we didn't know was that for the last few years people like Rancid and Dropkick Murphys had been referencing us as an influence."

Having re-formed, with Smith on board, Cock Sparrer (increasingly hailed as the template for much of modern street punk, with a largely untapped fan base in the US, South America, mainland Europe and Japan) set to work. Touring sporadically and whetting appetites at international punk festivals, they released *Guilty As Charged* in '94 and *Two Monkeys* in '97, gradually nurturing and growing their fan base. They couldn't remain the underground punk scene's best-kept secret forever.

Fiercely independent (they've not been beholden to any label since their Decca days), they finance and own their own recordings. With three unyielding, uncompromising, unmistakable albums since the turn of the century (*Here We Stand*, *Forever*, *Hand On Heart*), today's Cock Sparrer are as strong, possibly even stronger than they've ever been. Their low-key, hit-free career-in-reverse may never have

afforded them the trappings of fame and fortune, but they're still alive, still in fine, feral form and, most importantly, still friends.

"It's a lovely situation," concludes McFaul. "We're six mates – five in the band and a tour manager I've known since I was five years old – who get on a plane on Friday, have fun shouting at some nice people on Saturday and come home on Sunday. Who wouldn't want that?"

The history of UK punk has been written and rewritten again and again, but rarely reassessed. There's an enduring unchallenged orthodoxy that invariably puts the Sex Pistols/Clash axis at the centre of the story. It was, we're repeatedly told, a metropolitan art-school movement owing much to US musical progenitors, The Situationist International and King's Road exhibitionism. Whenever they make those fancy-schmancy BBC4 punk documentaries, Cock Sparrer are never there. Now that prevailing punk bears a closer resemblance to *Shock Troops* than to *Never Mind The Bollocks*, maybe it's about time that they were. 📍

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CREATURES OF HABITS

In the late 80s, **FM** seemed poised for huge success. By the mid-90s the dream, and the band, was effectively over. Then almost 20 years later a one-off gig offer changed everything...

Words: **Paul Elliott**

He didn't have to hear *Smells Like Teen Spirit* to know that he was fighting a losing battle. It was in 1990, a year before Nirvana's game-changing hit shook the world, when Steve Overland, the singer with FM, realised that his band had missed the chance of becoming rock's Next Big Thing.

Epic Records, the powerhouse label that was home to the multimillion-selling likes of Michael Jackson and George Michael, had seen huge commercial potential in FM's brand of slick melodic rock. "They were saying we were the British Bon Jovi, the next Foreigner," Overland recalls.

FM had the tunes. They had the look, with more than enough hair to compensate for their balding and daftly named keyboard player Didge Digital. And Steve had the voice, smooth and soulful like a young Paul Rodgers. But when the band's second album, *Tough It Out*, was released in 1989, Steve had sensed trouble during a meeting he attended with his brother Chris, the band's lead guitarist, at Epic's offices in New York.

"There was a really negative attitude from the Americans about working alongside the UK side of the company," Steve says. "And I remember sitting there thinking: 'This is gonna go wrong.' We'd made a brilliant album, we'd delivered it to one of the biggest record companies in the world, and it's theirs to fuck up. You know, it's out of our hands."

As he had feared, *Tough It Out* failed to break big, even with its firecracker of a single in *Bad Luck*, a shining, perfectly crafted rock anthem co-written with Desmond Child, the go-to 'hit doctor' whose magic touch had brought wins for Bon Jovi,

Cher, Aerosmith and more. In the wake of that disappointment came a pivotal moment in FM's career – another meeting in which Steve Overland decided he was done with pissing in the wind.

"The top people at Epic were present," he recalls. "They wanted us to make the third album in LA, so that we might get the kind of sound that the American bands had. And I just said: 'What's

"They [Epic Records] were saying we were the British Bon Jovi, the next Foreigner."

Steve Overland

the point?' They were like: 'What do you mean?' I said: 'We owe you one and a half million pounds already. So what's the point in sending us off to LA to make an album that we probably won't like and waste another two or three hundred grand?' They were shocked. You know, what band would say that? Well, we did."

As he relates this story, there is not a trace of

bitterness in his voice, just a shrug and smile at the strange nature of the music business.

Now, 34 years down the line, record company politics are of no concern to Steve Overland and FM. The band have found a natural home with Frontiers Records, whose roster includes both modern AOR acts and contemporaries of FM's from the 80s. And, as Steve explains, the support for the band from Frontiers has helped them navigate a period of intense emotional upheaval during the making of their new album, *Old Habits Die Hard*. First, Jem Davis, their keyboard player since 1993, underwent treatment for cancer. Then in September 2023 Chris Overland, who left the band in 1990, died at the age of 66.

"It's been hard," Steve says with a shake of his head. "An uphill struggle. With Jem getting cancer, that put us back a few months. And we'd just got back into the album when my brother passed away, so that obviously set me back for some time. But all the way through it, the guys at Frontiers were so understanding."

As its title suggests, *Old Habits Die Hard* sees FM sticking to what they know and do best. It's feel-good music that belies the circumstances in which it was created. *Out Of The Blue*, the lead-off single, is pure AOR. *Black Water*, another standout track, has the mood and groove of Bad Company circa 1976.

"We're a British band," Steve says. "We never wanted to sound too much like an American band. We always wanted to maintain a bit of that edge that British bands had in the 70s, along with the slickness and the harmonies."

Old Habits Die Hard is a significant milestone for FM, marking the 40th anniversary ➤



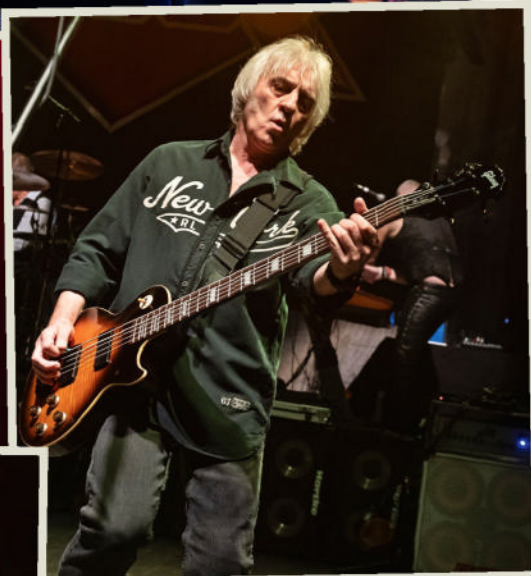
Andy Barnett (left) and Steve Overland with FM in the early 90s.



RAY DALLMAN/RETNA/CONTOPIX

Hair apparent: (clockwise from top left) Chris Overland, Steve Overland, Merv Goldsworthy, Didge Digital and Pete Jupp, 1989.

FM at Shepherd's Bush Empire, London in 2019: (clockwise) Steve Overland, Jim Kirkpatrick, Merv Goldsworthy, Pete Jupp, Jem Davis.



"We're a British band. We never wanted to sound too much like an American band."

Steve Overland

of the band forming in London with the line-up of Steve and Chris Overland, bassist Merv Goldsworthy and drummer Pete Jupp. All of them had previous form. Goldsworthy and Jupp had played together in New Wave Of British Heavy Metal band Samson. Goldsworthy had also briefly starred in another NWOBHM band, Diamond Head. But the Overland brothers had swum with the really big fish. Their band Wildlife had been managed by Peter Grant, the famously intimidating figure who steered Led Zeppelin to superstardom. Grant had brought another of his clients, former Free and Bad Co. drummer Simon Kirke, into Wildlife in place of Pete Jupp. And when the band signed to Zeppelin's vanity label Swan Song, it was a dream come true for Steve.

"I would have been nineteen then," he says. "I'd bought all the Zeppelin albums when I was younger, and then – bang! – you're on Swan Song! Peter Grant was

a real character. He always had meetings with us in a Winnebago in a lay-by just outside of London. That was strange. But it was a great experience, working with him and with a hero like Simon Kirke."

When Wildlife split in 1983, the Overlands wasted no time in putting FM together with Goldsworthy and Jupp, naming the band after a Steely Dan hit and for its radio-friendly

connotations. Their first demo tape featured *That Girl*, a signature song later recorded for a B-side by Iron Maiden. By chance, Meat Loaf's manager heard that demo, and promptly booked FM to open for the Loaf on a European tour, for which they brought in keyboard player Didge Digital (Philip Manchester to his mum).

After another high-profile tour, opening for Tina Turner, FM signed to Portrait (a subsidiary of Epic) for their debut album *Indiscreet*, released in 1986 and now widely

acclaimed as one of the great melodic rock albums of that golden era. Also in 1986, 'the British Bon Jovi' supported the actual Bon Jovi on a UK tour, as the American band went supernova with the *Slippery When Wet* album.

These were heady times. "With rock music in the eighties there was so much money being thrown around," Steve says. "And you get carried along on that wave. So when people keep telling you that you're going to be the next Bon Jovi, that's pretty exciting for a bunch of guys in their twenties."

But as FM were to discover with second album *Tough It Out*, all of that hype would only take them so far, and all the money invested in the band would ultimately end up as just another corporate write-off.

What FM delivered with *Tough It Out* was another classic of the genre. But when *Bad Luck*





Still toughing it out in 2024: (l-r) Merv Goldsworthy, Pete Jupp, Steve Overland, Jim Kirkpatrick, Jem Davis.

didn't deliver that all-important breakthrough as a single, FM arrived at a crossroads. Epic wanted to try again, but the band wanted out.

At the end of the *Tough It Out* tour, Chris Overland quit the band. As Steve recalls with a smile: "Chris was a man of few words. The way he broke it to me was: 'I think I've had enough of this.' That was it – that was his big announcement. He'd just had his first daughter, and he never liked touring. He was just a guy that loved writing songs. And I think the pressure really got to him on that tour."

Freed from their contract with Epic, and the debt that went with it, FM continued with a new guitarist, Andy Barnett, who had previously played alongside future Iron Maiden guitarist Adrian Smith in the band Urchin.

Then in 1996, after three more albums and a couple of line-up changes, it was Steve Overland who'd had enough. "The Seattle scene had really kicked in," he says. "We couldn't get press or radio any more. So I told the rest of the band I wanted a break. I thought we'd have two or three years off. But it turned out to be eleven."

During that hiatus, Steve earned a living as a session singer and running a covers band with Pete Jupp, doing corporate gigs plus the odd wedding. He remained unsure about an FM reunion until 2007, when they received an offer they couldn't refuse: a headlining show at boutique rock event Firefest, staged at Rock City in Nottingham. Steve presumed it would be a one-off gig. "I said: 'What have we got to lose? We can do it once, for nostalgic reasons.'" But the

reaction from the audience at Firefest had a profound effect on the band. "It was a magical night for us," Steve says. "When we came off stage, Andy was crying. He couldn't believe what happened. I don't think any of us could."

A few weeks after Firefest, the five members of FM met up at a diner on the A40 near London. With offers of more live dates and a record deal, they decided to go for it, with one caveat from Steve: "I said: 'We've got to do it two hundred per cent. We've got to be as good if not better than we were before.'"

There was one obstacle in front of them. Andy Barnett, having relocated to Malta, was unable to

the guitarist 20 years younger than the rest of them. "Jim is like my son," Steve says, laughing. "He can be a pain in the arse! But he really is a driving force in the band." On a deeper level, Steve is hugely appreciative of how Kirkpatrick plays old FM songs. "Jim is so respectful of my brother's playing," he says. "Chris's solos are like the solo in Free's *All Right Now* – if you don't play them like they are on the record, it sounds wrong."

FM's new album is dedicated to Chris Overland. "It would have been a big thing to have had him back in the band," Steve says. "He was offered the job, many times, but he didn't want to come back to it. After he left the band he never talked about

the music business, except when we got drinking. Then it would always be about his career. You know, they were the highlights of his life."

The funeral service for Chris included a slide show of photographs, many of which featured the two brothers together – as kids, and as the leaders of FM. "That was pretty devastating for me," Steve sighs. The music played

in memory of Chris were songs he had loved, among them Cyndi Lauper's ballad *Time After Time*. The service ended with a throwback to 1989, with the video for FM's *Bad Luck* playing: images of young men chasing a dream; a moment in time when anything seemed possible.

When Steve thinks of that, his smile returns. "We're still doing what we did back then," he says. "And we're lucky to have had a second crack at FM. That's how we look at it. We feel blessed to have this life making music. We still love it." ●

Old Habits Die Hard is out now via Frontiers. *FM* tour the UK until June 1.

"We're still doing what we did back then. And we're lucky to have had a second crack at FM."

Steve Overland

fully commit to a working schedule. Reluctantly, Barnett stepped down. After long months of auditions, Steve realised that the melodic guitar player they wanted had been right under his nose all along. Jim Kirkpatrick lived just a mile away from Steve's home in a village in Norfolk.

"I knew Jim was good," Steve says. "He'd worked with Bernie Marsden and a bunch of other people. So I asked him if he fancied a trial with us, and he said: 'Are you kidding? I was at the Firefest show, with this mania going on around me, and I was thinking: I want to be in a band like that!' So that's how it came about."

Since then, FM have made eight albums with

"Everything that could go wrong did go wrong"

They ran alongside Iron Maiden in the early days of the NWOBHM race. But while Maiden shot to fame, **Praying Mantis** stalled due to a catalogue of setbacks and bad decisions.

Words: **Dave Ling**

From the outset, Praying Mantis were more melodic and tune-conscious than their rivals in the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. In an era when blood, studded wristbands, bullet belts and thunderous riffola were king, co-founding siblings Tino and Chris Troy understood – fittingly for a group formed at no less a place of learning than the London College Of Furniture – the value of luxurious upholstery. “We’re more like a chaise longue than a flatpack picked up at IKEA,” Chris Troy says today, grinning. “Melody has always been innate in us.”

Born into a Spanish-Greek family with the surname Neophytou, Chris had started playing music on a Spanish guitar, so in the spirit of one-upmanship a jealous Tino came home from school one day with a self-made electric guitar. “When things got a little more serious I converted it to a bass for Chris to play,” recalls the elder sibling. The brothers were inspired by Status Quo (Chris recalls *Caroline* being the first song they played), as well as the twin-lead melodic guitars of Thin Lizzy and Wishbone Ash, whose song *Throw Down The Sword* was covered in early sets.

It was guitarist Bob Sawyer who first referred to Konstantinos as Tino. “The Troy part came from my love of Greek mythology,” the guitarist says. “The name Tino just stuck. I’ve been looking for a future wife called Helena ever since,” he quips.

With the nascent Praying Mantis making steady progress, the Troys visited NWOBHM’s home the Heavy Metal Soundhouse in Kingsbury, north-west London to hand DJ and scene guru Neal Kay a three-track demo that comprised *Lovers To The Grave*, *Captured City* and *Johnny Cool*, and soon those tracks featured in Kay’s playlist in weekly music paper *Sounds*. “On one week all three were included, I think,” Tino remembers.

“It was exciting. I thought: ‘This is it – our springboard to success.’”

With Iron Maiden having signed to EMI, and the NWOBHM gathering pace, record labels and band managers identified potential targets. With both Maiden and Mantis having tracks included on the EMI-released compilation *Metal For Muthas*, in February 1980 the two bands set out on a massive UK tour. Maiden headlined and Mantis were ‘special guests’, but they appeared on what was still pretty much an equal footing.

“There really wasn’t a great deal between the two bands, and on some nights we went down better than them, to the extent that they nicked our sound engineer Doug [Hall], and after the

the wrong ingredients,” Tino says ruefully, looking back. “Sure, we had some brilliant moments, but I’d like to go back and do it all again – properly.”

Things could have turned out very differently indeed. Neal Kay remembers two hot-shot American managers, Peter Mensch and Cliff Burnstein – who later would make megastars of Metallica and others – tuning up at his front door at 11pm one evening with the immortal words: “We were too late for Iron Maiden. What else have you got?” On hearing the Praying Mantis demo, they saw dollar signs. But there was one proviso. For a deal to be struck, Mantis had to bring in a specialist lead singer, freeing up Tino to concentrate on guitar, while a keyboard player would accentuate their rich bedrock of melody. According to Kay, the group turned down the offer flat.

However, Praying Mantis insist that they *did* try to follow Mensch’s advice. “Peter had been right in what he said,” Chris Troy says. “Keyboards would have added depth, and we did need a frontman to really deliver those songs. Everyone in the band agreed with that.”

“When I met Mensch at an Iron Maiden after-show party, I told him the band would consider his proposal, because it wasn’t working with King and his silent partner,” Tino adds. “Bob had asked: ‘Why would you want to go with these Americans? We can do anything for you that they can.’ Eventually we sacked them, but it was too late.”

“Meanwhile,” Chris continues, “Bob had told Peter we wouldn’t do what he suggested, so Mensch and Burnstein went away and signed another band, called Def Leppard, instead.”

Praying Mantis released their debut album, *Time Tells No Lies*, in 1981. Sporting an eye-catching Rodney Matthews-drawn sleeve and comprising breathtaking multi-layered songs such as *Children Of The Earth*, *Flirting With Suicide* and a re-recorded *Lovers To The Grave*, it has become acknowledged as a classic of the NWOBHM, although a review in *Sounds* by Paul Suter at the time blew hot and ➤

“We’re more like a chaise longue than a flatpack picked up at IKEA.”

Chris Troy

second tour they tried to get our drummer Dave Potts to join them,” says Tino. “Dave passed, saying: ‘I think Mantis will be the bigger band.’ I haven’t seen Dave since!”

Praying Mantis’s costliest mistake was going with management company Fireball, who began displaying poor judgement.

“Bob King was a former business partner of Rod Smallwood, who had taken on Iron Maiden. Maiden had Rod, we had the runt of the litter,” Tino sighs.

Mantis later signed to a record label, Arista, that had negligible experience in marketing and selling hard rock bands. Both moves would cost them dearly.

“We were in the right place at the right time... but with





The *Time Tells No Lies* debut line-up:
(clockwise from top left) Chris Troy,
Tino Troy, Dave Potts, Steve Carroll.



Praying Mantis 2024: (l-r) Hans In't Zandt, Chris Troy, John 'Jaycee' Cuijpers, Tino Troy, Andy Burgess.

cold, praising its “power and class” but lamenting: “The [problem] is that none of Praying Mantis can sing.”

Seeking the elusive hit single, Mantis began to record a cover of the Russ Ballard-written *I Surrender*, only to learn that Rainbow had beaten them to it and had taken the song to No.3 in the UK chart. “Everything that could go wrong *did* go wrong,” Tino Troy remembers. “However, all these years later the current line-up has included *I Surrender* on our new album, *Defiance*. Better late than never!”

The band added lead singer Tom Jackson, but he proved unsuitable. It took a year to reach that conclusion – further time wasted. Finally they brought in former Grand Prix and eventual Uriah Heep frontman Bernie Shaw, plus roadie-turned-keyboard player Jon Bavin.

Despite signing to Jet Records for a last-ditch single, *Turn The Tables*, and a well-received appearance at 1982's Reading Festival, Tino Troy admits: “The name of the band had gone cold. After ten years the train ground to a halt.”

The Troys and Bernie Shaw resurfaced alongside former Iron Maiden drummer Clive Burr and keyboard player Alan Nelson in Stratus (a name that brought to mind a rather naff brand of aftershave advertised on TV at the time). Their album *Throwing Shapes*, despite being very creditable, snuck out rather than being released.

It was the Far Eastern market that lured Praying Mantis into action again in 1990.

“The idea of a hybrid supergroup featuring [former Iron Maiden singer and guitarist respectively] Paul Di'Anno and Dennis Stratton came from Masa Itoh, the grand fromage of rock'n'roll in

Japan,” Tino explains. “We did a live album that was so well received, that impetus continued until around 2015.”

On *Live At Last* a five-piece band revisited Mantis gems as well as material from the first two Maiden albums and Stratton's post-Maiden band Lionheart. Musically it worked, though Di'Anno's involvement was short-lived, due largely to a tension with Stratton that simmered from their days in Maiden. Things came to a head with a violent altercation between the pair in a hotel in Japan when Stratton punched the singer and,

“Sure, we had some brilliant moments, but I'd like to go back and do it all again – properly.”

Tino Troy

during a second fracas, Tino dragged the comatose Di'Anno from the room. “Unfortunately I caught his hair extensions under my armpit and several came out,” he says, chuckling at the memory.

Di'Anno headed for the exit (via the hairdresser), but Stratton remained with Mantis for several high-quality albums over 16 years. Regrettably, they were largely unheard outside of Japan.

A pattern developed: the band would come together to record, play prestigious venues in Tokyo, and return to their lives in London. While the band played warm-up gigs in pubs in the UK, almost nobody

knew they were superstars on the other side of the globe.

An inability to hold on to a singer didn't help. Doogie White, Tony O'Hara

and Damian Wilson all at various times headed to Japan to take the Mantis mic.

“As much as the situation was frustrating, it was our own fault,” Tino reflects. “With those record deals we could have spread our tentacles across the world, but we didn't. Everybody had day jobs and there was no time. Somebody should have taken the bull by the horns. It annoyed me that singers used Mantis as a stepping stone, though I can't really blame them too much as we weren't really doing anything [of substance].”

A second hiatus followed the ironically titled album *The Journey Goes On*, before the appointment of Andy Burgess, a long-standing fan who over the following two decades helped to restore the twin-guitar sound that was such an early cornerstone.

“As a schoolboy I remember drawing the Praying Mantis logo on a bus stop in Sutton,” Burgess says with a laugh. “*Captured City*, the track from *Metal For Muthas*, was what made the younger version of myself fall in love with them – its mixture of melody and power.”

Assisted by a pair of formidable Dutchmen, singer John 'Jaycee' Cuijpers and Hans In't Zandt on drums, slowly but surely Mantis have put in the work and rebuilt their reputation. Their latest record, *Defiance*, is the fourth from this impressive line-up. Mantis had spotted the duo on the international festival circuit, and after some jamming the penny dropped that a hook-up would suit all parties.

“We weren't really looking for a drummer, Tino explains.

“Buy One Get One Free,” Chris interjects.

“But Hans was a great drummer, and when we approached them they agreed,” Tino adds.

The switch meant sacking existing singer Mike Freeland and drummer Gary Mackenzie, also something of a pair, which brought accusations of skulduggery.

“Sorry, but are you actually in this band?” Tino retorts to the internet trolls that became involved. “This is my career. And everything worked out for the best.”

The Troys are overjoyed that Praying Mantis have now lasted for a half a century. “It feels like a bit of a miracle, but it also makes me very proud,” Chris comments.

“At our level it's tough to keep a band going for this long.”

“I've a continuous squeal of tinnitus in my ears, also arthritis in my hands,” Tino confides. “I've had shoulder and knee operations, but I still jump off drum risers if they're not too high. I still love writing music and playing live. Each time, I say: ‘This is the last album.’” But a couple of gigs later that negativity vanishes.”

Satisfaction is tainted with regret, though. Understandably, the pair still wish they'd followed their gut instinct and sacked those former managers sooner than they did.

Chris ponders what might have been: “Had we had the current band back in 1981, this would have been a very different interview.”

“But then I might not have had my two beautiful daughters,” Tino says, smiling. “What life takes away with one hand, it gives with the other. So... sorry, but not sorry.”

Defiance is out now via Frontiers.



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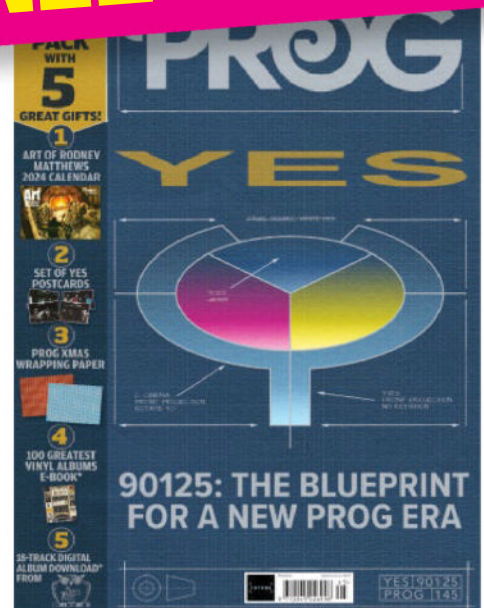
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A LITTLE BIT OF ENGLAND

With some top-drawer tunes, Paul Stanley producing and Kiss's management behind them, **New England** seemed, and felt, poised for stardom. Cue bad luck and trouble.

Words: Paul Elliott

When John Fannon thinks back to the heady days of 1979, when his band New England looked poised to become the next big thing in American rock, he remembers the precise moment when he believed that the dream would become a reality.

It happened as the band were travelling from their home town of Boston, Massachusetts to a gig in Denver, Colorado. Their debut single, *Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya*, a melodic rock anthem with a sky-scraping chorus, had just been released. It was a track made for radio, and DJs in Boston were playing the shit out of it. But for them to hear their song ringing out on an FM station near Denver, so far from home – that was something else.

"When those power chords came blasting through, it was a special moment," Fannon recalls. "We knew we were getting airplay all over the country, but this was our first experience of hearing it outside of Boston. We all pulled off the road – our caravan, cars, tour bus and truck – and were dancing and cheering on the side of the highway. I will never forget that feeling of joy, excitement, happiness. On top of the world!"

In that moment, New England had so much going for them. Fannon, the guitarist and lead singer, was a brilliant songwriter whose love for The Beatles was evident in a sound akin to a hard-rocking Electric Light Orchestra. On the band's self-titled debut album, *Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya* was one of many songs with genuine hit potential. And on a business level, the band had a powerful connection to one of America's biggest rock acts – they were managed by Bill Aucoin, the savvy tactician who had guided Kiss to superstardom. Kiss guitarist and vocalist Paul Stanley co-produced New England's album alongside Mike Stone, famed for his work with Queen. And for their first nationwide US tour, following that headline show in Denver, the young band would play to thousands every night, opening for Kiss in arenas. As Paul Stanley tells *Classic Rock* now, all these years later: "New England was a terrific band, and *Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya* was a real tour de force, a great, great song."

But for John Fannon and the other three guys in New England, the joy they experienced as they danced on the side of the freeway near Denver would be short-lived. *Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya* would climb to No.40 on the US *Billboard* chart, but no higher. The album would peak at No.50. And at a critical stage, their career would be derailed in the most unlucky and unlikely of scenarios – when their record company went bust after gambling on an album by, of all people, the Pope. No matter how great New England were, and how well-connected, the band failed to make it big.

"The book on New England is bittersweet," Fannon says. "They should have been huge' is a mantra I have heard for forty years. But it's not a bad way to be remembered."

It was in 1976 that Fannon put the band together with three other musicians he'd known for years on the Boston music scene: keyboard player Jimmy Waldo, bassist Gary Shea and drummer Hirsh Gardner.

The name of the band was not simply a reference to the region of the US they were from. It also signified where they were coming from – as Anglophiles inspired by The Beatles, Queen, Deep Purple, The Moody Blues and Procol Harum. "For us," Fannon says, "the name New England was not only geographical, like Boston, Chicago, Kansas. It was defining us as a new breed of English music, and we liked that!"

In common with so many American musicians of his generation, Fannon had "an epiphany" as a teenager when he saw The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964. Two of The Beatles' albums had a profound effect on him. "*Rubber Soul* began my appreciation of songwriting," he says, "and *Magical Mystery Tour* was an awakening for me – creativity off the charts! The use of orchestral instruments and storytelling lyrics had a big impact on me."

In 1971, another key influence for Fannon came with the self-titled debut album by ELO. "That album was the final motivation I needed to aspire to be as good a songwriter as I could be," he says. "New England definitely had a heavier side, but I always loved what orchestration could do to a song and a melody."

Fannon honed his craft for another seven years before New England signed with Bill Aucoin on the recommendation of his VP Ric Aliberte. "Ric loved the band," Fannon says. "He believed in us." And when Aliberte took Paul Stanley to

a band rehearsal, the Kiss star loved what he heard – an echo of the great British music that had resonated so powerfully in his own band.

"England was the holy land," Stanley says. "The home of The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, The Who... so many great bands. And with New England it was clearly an Anglophile type of band. John was rooted in The Beatles, and being the writer and the singer that came across very strongly. You could also hear in New England the bands that The Beatles had influenced – it was like The Beatles filtered through ELO."

As co-producer for New England, Stanley's role model was Bob Ezrin, who had worked with Kiss on their 1976 album *Destroyer*, a big-production blockbuster that raised Kiss's music to a whole new level. "Bob was a real producer," Stanley says, "not just the guy turning the knobs. He was constructing the songs."

"Paul and Mike Stone made a good team," says Fannon, "a good balance of technical and musical input. Mike was an extraordinary engineer who captured the energy and power of the band, and Paul brought superstar energy. He gave us a lot of confidence."

The bulk of the New England album was recorded in Los Angeles, where the band gained another famous admirer. Journey were recording in an adjacent room, and their singer Steve Perry would

"If it wasn't for a perfect storm of obstacles and misfortunes, we may have got to the top."

John Fannon



listen in to what New England were creating. “Steve told us he loved our sound,” Fannon says.

The band’s material had a broad range. The album’s opening track, *Hello, Hello, Hello*, was a glorious power-pop song so close to peak-era Jeff Lynne that they could have called it ELO, ELO, ELO. At the heavier end of the spectrum there was the fast-paced *P.U.N.K.* (Puny Undernourished Kid), of which Fannon says: “I wanted a song that was punkish musically, and thought it might be cool to do a lyric that was kind of a tongue-in-cheek message with some truth around the edges.”

The most important song – for the band, and for Fannon personally – was *Don’t Ever Wanna Lose Ya*. As he recalls of the night it was written: “A special person in my life was out in a very bad rain storm, and the song just came to me. The fears one has when you are worried about a loved one inspired the lyrics.” As a result, *Don’t Ever Wanna Lose Ya* had an extraordinary depth of emotion, comparable to Boston’s worldwide smash *More Than A Feeling*. There was power in its heavy riff, there was melodic sophistication with rich vocal harmonies and the quivering sound of a Mellotron. But the track needed something more to make it perfect. And it was Paul Stanley who called it.

“Originally there was no guitar solo,” Fannon says, “because I was concerned the song was too long for radio. But Paul said: ‘It’s a rock song! You gotta have a guitar solo!’”

When Fannon eventually nailed the solo, New England were in the old England – mixing the album at Trident Studios in London, on Paul Stanley’s orders. “My only prerequisite for doing the album,” Stanley says, “was that we mixed in London – a totally selfish decision, because I loved that city so much.” And he laughs when he recalls how he ended up singing a harmony part in *Don’t Ever Wanna Lose Ya*, following a lighthearted spat with drummer Hirsh Gardner.

“Hirsh was a funny guy. But this one time, when he was singing backgrounds, I kept saying: ‘Hirsh, that’s not quite right.’ He was doing it over and over, until he finally he said: ‘Well why don’t you do it?’ And one take later it was done. So that shut him up in the nicest possible way.”

Touring with Kiss provided Fannon with more wonderful memories – playing to an audience of 60,000 at the Pontiac Silver Dome in Michigan, and thousands more over two nights at Madison Square Garden in New York. “That was the brightest highlight of our performing career,” he says. “The response we got from Kiss fans was incredible.”

But then came the fall, as sudden as it was inexplicable. First there was frustration. “We were puzzled,” Fannon says, “when our management and record label pulled us off the road to do a new album when we were killing it everywhere and *Lose Ya* was still going strong.” Then, some months later there was outright disaster. “The band’s record



A smiling but disillusioned New England in 1981: (l-r) John Fannon, Hirsh Gardner, Jim Waldo, Gary Shea.

label, Infinity, had invested an astronomical sum in an album of speeches and songs in Polish by Pope John Paul II. When that album bombed, with returns approximated at one million, the label was bankrupted.

“We were in shock,” Fannon recalls. “The

Fannon pulled the plug on New England. “I felt the band was beginning to lose its chemistry. All the missteps and bad decisions had worn us down. It wasn’t fun any more.”

Following the split, Jimmy Waldo and Gary Shea formed Alcatrazz with guitar virtuoso

Yngwie Malmsteen and ex-Rainbow singer Graham Bonnet. Fannon chose a different path, beginning as a writer of jingles for TV ads.

In all the years since the demise of New England, he has continued to work in various capacities.

“Composer, sound designer and producer.” He now considers himself “semi-retired”. But in recent years the

four original members of New England have reunited to perform live again, in Japan in 2016 and in the US in 2019. Fannon believes there is more to come.

“To this day we are still the best of friends,” he says. “So there’s a good chance we will do more shows. And I’ve been saying for years we may do some new music. That is still a possibility.”

The summer of 2023 brought an unexpected twist, when the intro of the title track from *Explorer Suite* was sampled in superstar rapper Travis Scott’s hit single *Sirens*. “It would be awesome if this gave New England exposure to a new generation,” Fannon says.

And whatever the future holds, he can be proud of what his band created in the past. That first New England record is a masterpiece, one of the greatest AOR albums of all time.

“If it wasn’t for a perfect storm of obstacles and misfortunes, we may have got to the top,” Fannon says. “We dedicated much of our youth to trying to make some great, timeless music... and we achieved that.”

New England’s reissued self-titled debut album is out now via Rock Candy.

“The name New England was defining us as a new breed of English music, and we liked that!”

John Fannon

wheels were beginning to come off that express we had been on.”

New England signed to Elektra Records for the release of a second album, *Explorer Suite*, in 1980. But the deal with Elektra quickly turned sour, and *Explorer Suite* got lost in the shuffle. As Fannon admits: “Going with Elektra was another huge mistake. There was a lengthy delay on the album release and the band lost momentum.”

A third album, *Walking Wild*, was recorded in just two weeks in 1981 with the renowned studio genius Todd Rundgren (*Bat Out Of Hell* et al)

producing. Rundgren told Fannon: “This is a great record. Don’t let them screw it up!” But as Fannon recalls it: “Elektra had a lot of artists already at superstar status that didn’t require much effort. Unfortunately, bands still breaking did need some effort! But once again there was very little promotion for us.”

In 1982, a disillusioned





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THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



Bon Jovi

Forever EMI

Following JBJ's vocal surgery, the band are back, and it's about time.



It was difficult not to notice that something was amiss when Bon Jovi played at Wembley Stadium in 2019. That something was Jon Bon Jovi's voice – top notes went awry, melody lines fell flat. Not always, but often enough to be unsettling. The girl next to me – who would have once forgiven Jon if he'd accidentally driven his motorbike into her as long as she'd got an autograph – suggested we leave before the end.

Jon, who doesn't talk much, and says even less when he does, has been surprisingly candid of late: *Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story*, a four-part documentary airing on Disney +, charts his journey to combat his atrophied vocal cord and the major surgery to fix it. As he told *The Sunday Times* recently: "If the singing is not great, if I can't be the guy I once was, then I'm done... I don't ever need to be the fat Elvis."

Time will tell how arena shows around the world will treat one of the best rock stars of the past few decades (argue among yourselves), but at least latest album *Forever* is pointing him and his band in the right direction again. After the woeful, and pretty much solo, 2020 record, *Forever* sounds like a Bon Jovi album. Rock songs,

power ballads, it's a big-sounding record designed to be played to big rooms. Admittedly it's no *New Jersey*, but that's like expecting to still fit into the T-shirt you bought on that late-80s tour. Time has moved on for all of us.

We Made It Look Easy, a thrumming Bon Jovi staple-type track, charts the band's rise from New Jersey clubs to stadia status, and has heartfelt appeal. Bon Jovi has an ear for a nagging hook, and this one is into you before the first chorus has even faded away. Ditto the bubbling *Living Proof*, with its familiar, if extraneous, talk-box guitar intro, and an iron-clad chorus that hits like a linebacker at full tilt. Especially good, and probably the best track here, is *Waves*, which has the hallmark Bon Jovi cues, acoustic guitars, reflective lyrics, and a rousing chorus that builds to a dizzying, raise-your-fist hook that will translate into any language live. As always, the Bon Jovi ballads – *Kiss The Bride*, *My First Guitar* – underwhelm, but once you get to *Living In Paradise*, which is one big chorus with some song parts bolted to it, you won't care and, like Jon, you'll be racing forward to the future.



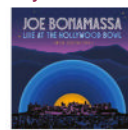
Philip Wilding

Joe Bonamassa

Live At The Hollywood

Bowl J&R ADVENTURES

Say hello to Hollywood.



Playing the Hollywood Bowl last August was another

milestone in Joe Bonamassa's illustrious career, and he did it in style; performing with a 40-piece classical orchestra.

The set was drawn from the 25 or so solo albums Bonamassa has released, going back to 2000's *A New Day Yesterday* for *If Heartaches Were Nickels* and featuring a couple from *Blues Deluxe Volume 2* which has been released since the show.

After a short set with just his own band, Bonamassa returned to the stage with the orchestra in tow. And while it takes a couple of songs for them to settle, the opening *When One Door Opens* (from *Royal Tea*) leaves a strong impression.

The arrangements – by conductor David Campbell and Trevor Rabin – cast Bonamassa's guitar in a whole new setting, most successfully on *Ball Peen Hammer* (from *Sloe Gin*) which is followed by *The Last Matador Of Bayonne* (from *Dust Bowl*).



Hugh Fielder

Grand Slam

Wheel Of Fortune

SILVER LINING MUSIC

Back for a second spin.



Oddly, this record is released alongside Hit *The Ground –*

Revised, a revamp of the current line-up's 2019 studio debut that revisited demos from 1983-84 made by the Phil Lynott-fronted version of Grand Slam. *Wheel Of Fortune* features all-new songs and the HTG quartet of Mike Dyer (vocals), Benjy Reid (drums), Rocky Newton (bass) and the one man there at the beginning, guitarist Laurence Archer. Full marks for persistence, Laurence, and for unashamedly Thin Lizzy-esque opener *There Goes My Heart*. Dyer is no Lynott, of course, but he can carry a tune. There are shades of Lizzy too in *Come Together (In Harlem)* and *I Wanna Know*, but elsewhere such lack of originality gets tiresome. *Star Crossed Lovers* and *Trails Of Tears* are by-numbers melodic rock, while two slower numbers border on ponderous. Archer's skill as a guitarist

shines through, and *Pirate's Song* tries to be different, but this is a hard album to love.

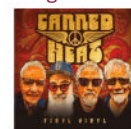


Neil Jeffries

Canned Heat

Finyl Vinyl RUF

Last bow from the veteran boogie men.



One 1968 highlight has to be Canned Heat, then including Al

Wilson, Henry Vestine and Bob Hite, doing *On The Road Again* on *Top Of The Pops*. On drums was Fito De La Para, Canned Heat's only constant member through various incarnations up to this swansong album with singer-guitarist-harp maestro Dale Spalding, bassist Rick Reed and lead guitarist Jimmy Vivino.

After self-explanatory opening salvo *One Last Boogie* and *Blind Owl* (written and sung by Dave Alvin), the Heat re-fry their boogie from John Lee Hooker's original template, characteristically expanded to include *East/West Boogie's* instrumental workout around *Theme From Tehran* and intimate confessional *Independence Day*.

Revisiting the environmental comment of the 1970-written song *So Sad (The World's In A Tangle)*, bolstered by Joe Bonamassa, still sounds relevant, but the advancing years faced on *When You're 69* provide a major theme, if rendering *Tease Me* a tad queasy.



Kris Needs

Crowded House

Gravity Stairs BMG

Neil Finn's band make contemplative return.



Since the sad loss of the band's original drummer Paul Hester in 2005,

nearly all of Crowded House's albums have required a patient ear. *Gravity Stairs* is no exception.

Gone (for the most part) are the familiar pop hooks that dominated those early records, exchanged for more thoughtful, complicated arrangements as frontman Neil Finn contemplates his own mortality. Dreamy opener *Magic Piano* drives this particular thought as he imagines hiking up his own stairway to heaven, while pianos play by themselves and dark forces conjure suspicious shadows. The same downbeat approach also inhabits the melancholic *Some*



Lenny Kravitz

Blue Electric Light ROXIE/BMG

Special K: eclectic, fun-filled double album from the retro-centric king of cool.



It's taken a long time for the world to come round to Lenny Kravitz's way of thinking. Widely seen – at least in critical circles – as a 60s-obsessed anomaly at the time of his 1989 debut *Let Love Rule*, his classicist sound and vintage-themed aesthetic are now recognised as bywords for good taste, borne out by his lucrative side-hustle as design consultant for brands including Rolex watches and Dom Pérignon champagne.

His global success, meanwhile – 40 million albums sold over a glittering, Grammy-filled 35-year career – has seen him back up his hippie-ish interest in eco-centric concerns with positive action. When he's not touring, or pursuing projects as a respected actor (notably in *The Hunger Games*), he spends his time at his own artistic Eden, a 1,000-acre artistic retreat deep in the rainforests of Brazil, which is also a fully functioning farm.

Six years on from 2018's *Raise Vibration*, *Blue Electric Light*, his twelfth studio album, unsurprisingly finds him sounding refreshed and revitalised. Opener *It's Just Another Fine Day (In This Universe Of Love)* sets the tone. A blissed-out, post-covid celebration of the beauty of planet Earth, its hollered cries of 'Lockdown!' contrast with a kaleidoscopic backdrop of dreamy

harmonies and spiralling guitars. It's a sonic calling card for a typically diverse collection pulsating with positive energy. So both the *Star Wars*-themed *TK421* and the strident *Paralyzed* come with a rock crunch worthy of 1991's *Mama Said*, while *Human* is a breezy blast of electro-funk with the unarguable refrain: 'I came here to be alive, I'm here to be human.'

There's a similarly off-the-clock feel to Prince-like gem *Bundle Of Joy*, and riotous T.Rex-style stomp *Love Is My Religion*, while *Heaven* welds despair at humankind's lack of spiritual growth to a sizzling groove brimming with liquid synths and strutting funk bass. *Spirit In My Heart*, meanwhile, finds the 59-year-old musing guilelessly on the redemptive power of love, crooning: 'You bring out the best in me, I love you endlessly.'

Kravitz's libidinous lyrics may always prove a stumbling block for some, not least on the squelchy soul gem *Honey*, in which he croons: 'It don't take much to turn me on.' But then, as Spinal Tap's Nigel Tufnel once pointed out, what's wrong with being sexy?

Blue Electric Light is the perfect sonic tonic for troubled times.



Paul Moody

The Mysterines

Afraid Of Tomorrows

FICTION

Murky Merseyside rock twinned with Lynch country.



Devotees of dark Americana can now begin their pilgrimage to Lynch

country closer to home – in the Wirral. Inspired by 2002 documentary *Meet Me In The Bathroom* to revisit the noughties New York music that influenced their youth, Merseyside four-piece The Mysterines indulge a kind of sweetly insidious, grittily gothic sci-fi noir on this second album. Gutter-crawling future rock like *Stray* and *Tired Animal* come across as rather more post-grunge Garbage than like anything to do with The Strokes, but singer Lia Metcalfe conjures a damaged dustbowl chanteuse to rival Alison Mosshart and Anna Calvi, and there's certainly enough slasher-guitar menace, haunted howling and anguished Throwing Muses melody creeping up on you to honour the southern gothic rock tradition. It's a record modernised, ironically, by its more timeless moments: the crackling radio samples on *Hawkmoon* (which cracks open like a pharaoh's tomb in the final minute), the glitchy flamenco of *Inside A Matchbox*, or the antique organ driving end-of-affair ballad *So Long*.

The Mysterines deepen.

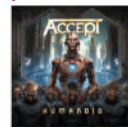


Mark Beaumont

Accept

Humanoid NAPALM

It's 2024. Do you know where your balls are?



There's been a surprising new development in the metal

world recently: ancient titans such as Scorpions, Judas Priest and Megadeth have all released incredible, career-defining albums decades after their commercial peak. Now add Accept – just two years shy of their 50th anniversary – to that lofty roster.

Humanoid is their seventeenth album, but you could easily slot it between 1983's *Balls To The Wall* and 1985's *Metal Heart* and no one would blink. A loose treatise on the impending horrors of rampant AI, *Humanoid* delivers anthemic, bad-boy-boogie bone crunchers (the infectious *Man Up*, sleazy

rocker *Straight Up Jack*) as well as plenty of searing proto-power metal rippers, from the chugging *Diving Into Sin* to the horror-soaked *Frankenstein* and the Dio-esque *Mind Games*.

Former TT Quick frontman Mark Tornillo has been with the band so long you hardly miss ol' truncheon-wielding Udo at all. His bluesy sore-throat roar is fierce and commanding, a caged tiger chewing through its bars, and the twin terror of guitarists Wolf Hoffman and Uwe Lulis elevates these teutonic headbangers to epic territory.

Lots of gas left in this tank.



Sleazegrinder

Buffalo Tom

Jump Rope SCRAWNY

Album number 10, and still loving mid-America rock.



I lost track of Buffalo Tom some time around their fifth album

Sleepy Eyed (1995) – the very apotheosis of sincere, heart-tugging college rock. Although, to be fair, this lovable Boston three-piece did take a lengthy hiatus a couple of years later, returning with all original members in 2007 just as passionate, unassuming and in love with the mid-America rock of The Replacements and the Rolling Stones as before.

Jump Rope is their tenth, and is chock-full of their trademark bittersweet harmonies and hooks, Bill Janovitz's voice certainly benefitting from the passage of time in its richness and sweep. Place tracks such as the two singles *Helmet* and the chiming, circular *New Girl* *Singing* alongside recent offerings from Teenage Fanclub and old comrade-in-arms J Mascis, and praise Westerberg that bands like Buffalo Tom in their haunted, bluesy groove continue to sound just as fresh as they did when the band first formed 40 years ago.



Everett True

Kerry King

From Hell I Rise

REIGNING PHOENIX

The best Slayer album Slayer never made.



Kerry King was the founding guitarist with Slayer, and one of the chief architects of the thrash metal mainstays' sound over their



Paul Weller

66 POLYDOR

Britpop's favourite grumpy uncle channels Bowie, Bacharach and Blur.

Against the odds, Paul Weller has entered a liberating new creative phase over the past decade or so. Once the unchanging man, obstinate brand leader for rootsy Real Ale Rock, the former Jam and Style Council frontman has broadened his sonic horizons significantly on recent albums, making some of the most adventurous and kaleidoscopic music of his long career. Embracing lavish orchestration, experimental soundscapes, left-field collaborators and electronic textures, Weller seems to have finally twigged that the great flowering of 60s pop gave him a set of tools, not rules.

Titled to reflect his upcoming landmark birthday, 66 sports a striking Pop Art cover painting by 91-year-old legend Peter Blake, his first for Weller since 1995's *Stanley Road*. Lyrical and musical guests include Noel Gallagher, Bobby Gillespie, Suggs and Richard Hawley; there are enough familiar faces here to reassure Weller traditionalists. But 66 also prominently features younger talents including French art-pop producer Christophe Vaillant, electronic composer and string arranger Hannah Peel, and Brooklyn vocal trio Say She She. Confirming Weller's long-time role as unofficial uncle to the Gallagher brothers, Noel makes a vocal cameo on blues-rock

chugger *Jumble Queen*, the most conventional track here.

But the Modfather always had more musical common ground with their Britpop rivals Blur, a comparison that has only deepened as Weller's latter-day albums leaned more into wistful, yearning, grainy-voiced English chamber-pop. There are certainly Blur-ish moments scattered across 66, from the tenderly crooned, lightly electronic psych-pop ballad *Flying Fish*, to the gorgeous *Nothing*, a jazzy romantic pastoral that sounds like Damon Albarn channelling Curtis Mayfield.

Quality levels are consistently high, with sublime finger-picked folk-pop reveries like *I Woke Up* nestled alongside sumptuous, harp-kissed, Bacharach-sized chansons like *Rise Up Singing* and *Glimpse Of You*. On the lushly orchestrated fairground-pop waltz *My Best Friend's Coat*, Weller's melismatic warble hits Marc Almond-ish levels of torrid melodrama at times. Meanwhile, the reverb-drenched avant-doo-wop swooner *In Full Flight* is one of the finest, and strangest, things he has ever recorded.

From suburban Woking to the farther fringes of the pop cosmos, Weller's surprising but very welcome space-rock odyssey continues.

★★★★★★

Stephen Dalton



The Lemon Twigs A Dream Is All I Know

CAPTURED TRACKS

Brothers in harmony deliver retro pop-rock triumph.



The fifth album by Brian and Michael D'Addario presents us

with a stunning revelation: all the great power-pop classics haven't already been written. These phenomenally talented dudes honed their craft by studying The Beach Boys, Todd Rundgren and The Raspberries (to name but three of their obvious influences), but this is so much more than mere pastiche, they absorb the past while creating something timeless all of their own.

Every carefully arranged song is packed with indelible hooks, melodic invention and heavenly multi-layered harmonies – all recorded on analogue. *My Golden Years* is a thing of bittersweet, sun-kissed beauty; *Church Bells* communes with *Rubber Soul* Lennon; *In The Eyes Of The Girl* mines the pure essence of early Beach Boys balladry; *Peppermint Roses* is the best song Monkee Micky Dolenz never sang. It's a wonderful, big warm hug of a record.

★★★★★★

Paul Whitelaw

Black Country Communion

V&J&R ADVENTURES

Fifth album from the retro-styled supergroup.



After four albums, we know what to expect: Led Zeppelin

mashed with Trapeze. Even after seven years since their previous album, BCC remember what they're good at – and what we like. They're certain we're impressed by the brilliant vocals (and bass playing) of Glenn Hughes. That we'll like it when Joe Bonamassa sprays a solo in the guise of Jimmy Page. And be grateful that Jason Bonham's drumming has powerful shades of his late, great father.

So without deviating from the template (except, maybe, on *Skyway*), what catches the ear on V are the keyboards of Derek Sherinian. Whether soloing, counterpointing a guitar riff or adding background tones, his Hammond organ lifts virtually every track. When he peaks, the album peaks – on the six-

and-a-half-minute *You're Not Alone* and final song *The Open Road*. The latter has Hughes channelling 60s soul, then morphs into Free. We were obviously going to like that.

★★★★★★

Neil Jeffries

The Karma Effect

Promised Land EARACHE

Party rockers get a powerful second wind.



Since forming in the early days of the pandemic, unable to play live at first, this London quintet have made regular appearances on festival bills, and this first album for new label Earache deserves to further raise their profile, even if it makes no claims towards reinventing the hard-rock wheel.

Where they do show creative flair is in not relying on shuffle riffs and rabble-raising choruses like those found on opening statement of intent *Livin' It Up* or the Poison-esque *Wild Honey*. Instead they skilfully reach a little further to draw on influences from adjacent musical milieux, as on the likeably gospel-inflected rock'n'soul testimonial *Be My Salvation*, power ballad *Falling For You Again* and southern rock romp *See You Again*.

Promised Land? That might be pushing it a little, but it's a fun place to spend an hour of your time.

★★★★★★

Johnny Sharp

Lowlives

Freaking Out SPINEFARM

An ocean-hopping, time-skipping call-back to alt.rock's glory days.

Lowlives paint in shades of alternative with this debut. The titular opening track kicks things off with giddy punk rock in the vein of The Bronx or Dirty Nil, before giving way to unabashed love for the sounds and tones of 90s alt. acts. Touching on elements of latter-day grunge on tracks like *Liar* and *Loser* (think *Sixteen Stone* era Bush), or elsewhere Smashing Pumpkins/Deftones-like shoegaze-adjacency on *Swan Dive*, the album is a love letter to both the glory days of alt.rock and the sunshine-soaked tones of the West Coast the band now inhabit.

While on paper that might cast them in the shadow of

behemoths, the band's enthusiasm soon proves infectious. Nigh-on every track is loaded with big singalong choruses and chunky, punchy guitars, making *Freaking Out* a perfect soundtrack for a summer where anything could happen – and, who knows, for Lowlives it just might.

Rich Hobson

Peter Dinklage

Drama King SPINNING TOP

Aussie troubadour who sits somewhere between Paul Westerberg and Wreckless Eric.



This might be Bibby's fourth album, but it sounds like as good a place to start as any for those who have managed to resist his ramshackle charms thus far. Newly sober, and his first record with a producer, it's a charming, occasionally woozy, heart-on-your-sleeve sort of affair.

Judging by the lyrics, you imagine that Bibby was something of a burden when in his cups, from the happiest chap at the bar to rancorous prick by the end of the night. That said, get past the first two songs – *Areshole* and *Fun Guy* – and you get to the more honed, less down-at-heel introspection: ambitious arrangements and instrumentation, and more

production on tracks such as the excellent, driven *Bruno* (think The Strokes playing a pub in Adelaide) and the album's defiant, final ringing note, the wonderful paean to a former racehorse in retirement, *Companion Pony*.

Philip Wilding

Fu Manchu

The Return Of Tomorrow

AT THE DOJO

Veteran desert rockers deliver heavy fuzz.

Fu Manchu's previous album, 2018's *Clone Of The Universe*, was a very cinematic trip, lurching violently from a fistful of two-minute stoner-punk ragers into a 20-minute couch-of-woe space oddity. It was a long way from the desert-rock band's salad days of skate-ready jams about vans and weird beards.

New album *The Return Of Tomorrow* takes us further into the weeds (pun intended). The first half is all crushingly heavy dope-rock jams in a burly, Monster Magnet-meets-Clutch sorta way, full of menacing riffage and crazed soloing. It's the heaviest shit Fu Manchu have ever done, and it's fantastic. The second half is a slight return to their 90s heyday, with easier tempos and mellow(ish) vibes. Like *Clone*, *The Return* is about to be unspooled in order, a journey to

the centre of your mind care of stoner rock's undisputed kings of the road. I recommend you follow their orders. I've been levitating for three days now.

Sleazegrinder

Beaux Gris Gris And The Apocalypse

Hot Nostalgia Radio

GROW VISION

A wild ride across the airwaves.



Essentially a rootsy blues band at heart, Beaux Gris Gris And The Apocalypse enjoy nothing more than defying expectations and genre boundaries. And so it is with *Hot Nostalgia Radio*.

Four years in the making, and chief songwriters Greta Valenti (vocals) and Robin Davey (guitar) go pretty much wherever they want across these 14 tracks. For hard-rocking blues look no further than blazing opener *Oh Yeah!*, *Wild Woman* and *Satisfy Your Queen*. *Middle Of The Night* and *Sad When I'm Dancing* throw some classic 60s soul into the mix, before we take a country detour with *Penny Paid Rockstar* and finish with a bit of Cajun/zydeco-influenced rock'n'roll on *Let's Ride* and *Mama Cray*, the latter pair a big nod to Valenti's Louisiana roots. Valenti's vocal prowess is simply extraordinary

throughout, and the writing chemistry with Davey is undeniable. *Hot Nostalgia Radio* is a bit of a tour de force, really.

Essi Berelien

Ferocious Dog

Kleptocracy GRAPHITE

Sixth album from Celtic folk-punk-derived protest mob.

Wearing their influences on their intricately tattooed and work-worn sleeves, Nottinghamshire's Ferocious Dog certainly aren't reinventing the folk-punk wheel; their Pogues, Levellers and New Model Army inspo is in plain audible sight. Frantic and urgent with lyrics even the most ill-informed knucklehead could understand, their topsy fiddle-dee-dee style might not be to everyone's taste, but their hearts are in the right place. Themes include topical injustices such as the violence of war in the *Streams Of Whiskey*-like *Blood Soaked Shores*, and homelessness in *A Place We Call Home*, the latter featuring captivating soaring melodies from guest vocalist Lizzey Joy Ross – Ferocious Dog's very own Kirsty MacColl.

But it's in a live setting that the Dog truly come alive, so it's a shame that kinda cider-sodden chaotic party atmosphere isn't better reflected in the album's production. With too many polished corners, it could have

benefitted from a more abrasive coarse-grit finish.

Alex Burrows

Bad Nerves

Still Nervous SUBURBAN

Grotty, tons-of-fun punk follow-up.



Having landed a fair few prestigious tour slots and attracted some rock-star fans with their 2020 debut, for *Still Nervous* Bad Nerves headed back to the same garage to do it all over again (if it ain't broke...)

There's maybe a bit more melody and greater variety in the pacing this time round – frontman Bobby Nerves would likely point you in the direction of the glammy 70s pop sensibilities of *Sorry* and breezy singalong *Alright* – otherwise these dozen tracks mostly rattle past in a pleasingly snotty blur, largely untroubled by any production values whatsoever. The excellent *Television* and standouts *You've Got The Nerve* and *USA* are confidently speedy anthems, while *Jimmy The Punk* is pretty self-explanatory, and the hyper jittery *Antidote* makes the Ramones sound like Toto.

Reassuringly greasy, lo-fi punk, ideal for snacking between Green Day albums.

Essi Berelien

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE



Mean Mistreater: maximum rock'n'roll.

Mean Mistreater

Razor Wire SELF-RELEASED



Austin's Mean Mistreater hark back to those halcyon days before every metal band had their own niche sub-genre, when they were basically all heavy rock'n'roll – see Priest, Riot, Rods, Rose Tattoo etc. With serious belter Janiece Gonzalez up front and twin guitars

that fire from every direction at once, this band could give any of those pioneers a run for their money.

Befitting a band named after a Grand Funk Railroad song, Mean Mistreater bludgeon your brains with thick riffs, nasty rhythms and a party-till-we-die atmosphere – witness their sleazy charms with arena-wreckers like *Bleeding The Night*, *Waiting To Die* and *Let 'Em Roll*. No ballads, no compromises,

just maximum rock'n'roll. This is the record to take along if you wanna fight an entire biker gang single-handed or shoot holes in the Moon with an elephant gun or drink five gallons of Budweiser before work. How they formed a year ago is a mystery. They sound like they've been together for ever. The performances, the production, the songwriting, it's all flawless. Is this magic?

Sleazegrinder

Piss Test

Don't Care SELF-RELEASED



A Floridian supergroup of ex-hardcore punk survivors, Piss Test are a loose-limbed rock'n'roll band with a snotty attitude, and songs about growing old disgracefully. From *Everything Hurts* ('Oy vey, way past my prime') to *Last One Standing* ('I'll be the last one standing, with a beer in my hand'), this is probably the most honest and endearingly heroic punk rock record I've heard in ages.

Sleazegrinder

Angel Face

Angel Face SLOVENLY



Led by Fink from 90s Japanese garage-punk legends Teengenerate, Angel Face are a blast of wild energy and infectious, hooky rock'n'roll. They definitely have a few Generation X and Johnny Thunders records in their collections, and, in true punk fashion, songs barely scratch the two-minute mark. It's fun, frenetic, and one of the most charmingly obnoxious records of the year.

Sleazegrinder

By Sleazegrinder

Tiny TVs

So Easy SELF-RELEASED



I'm desperate to get back to the good of days when rock'n'roll bands wrote songs about relatable shit like getting fired or passing out on the sidewalk. It's like young people refuse to be as gleefully dysfunctional as we were, for some reason. But not only do Tiny TVs' songs swing with true rock abandon, their lyrics tell the story of terminal slackers permanently slumming it. I love it.

Sleazegrinder

Smoking Snakes

Danger Zone SELF-RELEASED



Swedish leather boys Smoking Snakes are absolutely gonna stay up all night, and will probably drive their Camaro into your pool. Raised on W.A.S.P., Crüe and 80s-era Kiss, they throw subtlety right out the window and bash your brains with heavy riffs and yell-along choruses. Pure, undistilled sleaze-metal for the beer drinkers and hellraisers among us.

Sleazegrinder



Blue Öyster Cult

Ghost Stories FRONTIERS

Hard-rock mavericks take a trip back in time with AI-enhanced odds 'n' sods album.



At their peak, Blue Öyster Cult embodied the earthy and the enigmatic simultaneously. Their ability to switch between choogling bar-room boogie and weird, mystical heavy rock hymns was unmatched. The streak of strangeness that surrounded them was amplified by the coterie of journalists, authors and outside songwriters they enlisted to help realise their vision; everyone from sci-fi nabob Michael Moorcock to Patti Smith has been involved at one point or another.

Conceptually, *Ghost Stories*, their fifteenth album, leans into their maverick side. It's 'new' only in the sense that its 12 songs have never been heard before in this form. They're mostly long-forgotten out-takes dating from recording sessions between 1978 and 1983, fished out from down the back of the sofa of history by charter members Eric Bloom and Donald 'Buck Dharma' Roeser. Any missing parts have been fleshed out by AI and, more touchingly, original rhythm section Joe and Albert Bouchard, as well as late keyboard player Allen Lanier.

The origin story is more unusual than the music, although a few lost gems have been unearthed. *Cherry* is a Chuck Berry-indebted rock'n'roll romp with a killer 'Whoah-oh' chorus, *Supernatural* is as

strange and spooky as its title, while the excellent *Shot In The Dark* begins as a supper-club jazz pastiche, complete with gumshoe-style spoken-word intro, before twisting into a sparkling early-80s rocker.

What the album lacks is a sense of cohesion, which is understandable given its mix-and-match origins. Worse, some of these songs should have stayed lost. Presumably the plodding *Soul Jive* and the strained *Money Machine* were left off their respective albums for a reason, while route-one covers of The Animals' *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place* and the MC5's *Kick Out The Jams* (long a BÖC live favourite, making its debut as a studio track here), plus a lo-fi, campfire version of The Beatles' *If I Fell*, add little to the BÖC myth.

Ghost Stories is being trailed as the band's farewell album – unsurprising given that Bloom and Roeser are 79 and 76 respectively. That lends it a weight it doesn't necessarily deserve, although at this stage any new Blue Öyster Cult music is better than no new Blue Öyster Cult music, even if the definition of 'new' is elastic. Ultimately, *Ghost Stories* is a long way from essential, even as a history lesson, but neither does it disgrace their illustrious name.



Dave Everley

Eels

Eels Time!

E WORKS/PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

Fifteenth studio album, featuring collaborations from Koolhaas, The Chet, Tyson Ritter among others.



There's a sense of post-pandemic aftermath about *Eels Time!*

– *Time*, the opener, was the groups' first get-together since the beginning of lockdown, and has about it a rueful sense of sands running out, Simon & Garfunkel-esque in the soar and drizzle of its strings. *We Won't See Her Like Again* is a gentle, tremulous paean, classic in feel, as if from a forever 1960s. *If I'm Gonna Go Anywhere* is infused, lit up, with sonic ambition, reverberant, twisted. *And You Run* – written when E was in his teens – reworked, another brilliant production, this time Brian Wilson-esque in its ambition. *Sweet Smile* promotes the idea of happiness as a default facial expression, while *I Can't Believe It's True* movingly explores the joys and challenges of parenthood.

An impeccable, emotionally undulating, ultimately defiant set of songs from an old master.



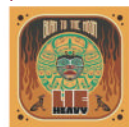
David Stubbs

Lie Heavy

Burn To The Moon

HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

American rock journeymen transcend the sum of their parts.



How super do a group's members have to be to form a supergroup?

North Carolina-based quartet Lie Heavy have been described as such, given that Canadian frontman Karl Agell fronted Corrosion Of Conformity briefly in the early 90s, and guitarist Graham Fry did a stint early on with prog-metallers Confessor. But The Traveling Wilburys they ain't. Either way, the strength of the music on this debut makes their CVs seem barely relevant.

The lurching grunge-caked groove of *Lie Heavy* is a stand-out as Agell's charismatic booming vocal delivery helps keep ears pricked up, then the contrasting anxious vocal timbre and fired up tempo of *When The Universe Cries* makes them resemble a turbo-charged Sabbath. There's a likeable low-slung bluesy strut to *Unbeliever*

that suggests their natural habitat is slow-burning heavy grooves, but in all those cases they don't need claims to fame to sell such robust wares.



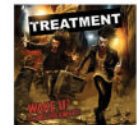
Johnny Sharp

The Treatment

Wake Up The

Neighbourhood FRONTIERS

It's all a bit tame on Cambridge revival rockers' sixth album.



The problem with tying your band so tightly to the past is that you can forget to write some songs of your own.

Classic rock quintet The Treatment have been plugging away with no shortage of spirit for nearly 15 years – and they have some decent tunes to show for it – but there's a lack of edge on *Wake Up The Neighbourhood*. Opener and lead single *Let's Wake Up This Town* talks a good game, yet it plods along like an exiled AC/DC B-side. *When Thunder And Lightning Strikes* has a tasty, lurching riff and a nifty solo section, but Tom Rampton's vocals dilute its bite. Likewise on the Alice Cooper-inspired *Man On The Highwire*.

Appraising something so desperately reliant on pastiche is tricky because intent is everything. If harmless, good-time rock'n'roll watered down from the genre's best appeals, then great. But if you like your loud guitar music to defend the faith with innovation and the occasional risk, you might be better off skipping this one.



Chris Lord

Nestor

Teenage Rebel NAPALM

Sophisticated second from the slow-burning Swedes.

Although Swedish five-piece Nestor had formed as long ago as 1989, only to fall into dormancy without releasing an album, in 2021 – more than three decades later – they made one of the most unforeseen yet satisfying AOR comebacks of modern times. Their debut record *Kids In A Ghost Town* was full of refreshing, unashamedly 80s-style melodic rock that Nestor cleverly converted into eye-catching videos, including *Tomorrow*, a sublime piano-led duet between frontman Tobias Gustavsson and none other than former Page 3 pin-up Samantha Fox (yes, really).

Apart from a narrated monologue from the Danish voice actress Freya Miller that heralds a triumphant opener *We Come Alive*, there are no guests on *Teenage Rebel*; Nestor stand or fall alone. This time the element of surprise is lost, of course, but from the exuberant title track to *Victorious* and another deliciously overblown weepie, *The One That Got Away*, normal service is soon resumed.



Dave Ling

Datcha Mandala

Koda DM PROD

French power trio continue their forward momentum. This three-piece from Bordeaux have gigged tirelessly around Europe in recent years, and will surely impress anyone who catches them in the UK – Brexit permitting – on the back of a lean, mean third studio album.

Their trump cards are once again melodies infused with a melancholic longing by Nicolas Sauvey's faintly Geddy Lee-like vocals, nailed into your memory with punchy rhythmic pulses and simple but incisive instrumental hooks such as the two-note riff of *Love Myself*. They have a likeable tendency towards the epic, too, as on the lament-turned-anthem *Wild Fire* and closing track *Homeland*, which takes the tempo of Led Zep's *Kashmir* and uses it as the platform for a spiritually infused turbo-mantra. Formidable, as they say in France.



Johnny Sharp

Little Feat

Sam's Place HOT TOMATO

Feats don't fail the blues.



Little Feat might have lost original members since forming

in 1969, but they still brandish supernatural chops and signature Louisiana swagger, as long-time conga player Sam Clayton steps up to handle vocals with gruff aplomb on their first blues-based album.

With original keyboard player Bill Payne and bassist Kenny Gradney joined by guitarist Fred Tackett, slide guitarist Scott Sharrard, drummer Tony Leone and harmonica maestro Michael 'Bull' LoBoe, Feat seamlessly plug in to the Willie Dixon-Muddy Waters songbook (apart from Clayton's brass-laden opener *Milk Man*), with

Bonnie Raitt duetting on the latter's *Long Distance Call*. Effortless virtuosity and timeless idiosyncratic tropes elevate nine tracks recorded at Sam Phillips Studio in Memphis (except for the live *Got My Mojo Workin'*).

Hearing the Feat flaming on dazzling form more than 50 years after early landmark albums such as *Dixie Chicken* and *Feats Don't Fail Me Now* is oddly reassuring in these turbulent times.



Kris Needs

Marisa And The Moths

What Doesn't Kill You

TONESICK

Gleaming radio-friendly pop-rock from Brits with their eyes on the big-time prize



There's nothing like a confessional album as the ultimate means

to get back at a rotten ex. And on Marisa's second album she is certainly wearing her heart on her sleeve on *Gaslight*, a huge, blustery smack-back of polished neo-grunge in which she combines her impressive vocal range with a growl of palpable fury.

Written in the aftermath of a near-death covid experience that threatened the singer's voice, this album drips with ambition, veering from torch-song opener *Cursed* to the soaring, singalong alt.pop of *Borderline*, and taking in struggles with abusive relationships, eating disorders and anxiety, all underpinned with a sense of defiance, both musically and lyrically setting themselves up as an Evanescence for the 2020s. And while it's a very busy album – almost too busy – there's drive, talent and emotional transparency at play that suggests the massive crossover pop success they so clearly crave is well within their grasp.



Emma Johnston

Valley Lodge

Shadows In Paradise TEE PEE

Yet more sunny pop-rock brilliance.



Valley Lodge mainman, singer and guitarist Dave Hill seems to

inhabit a niche in the space-time continuum where it is perpetually 1977 California, all

summer sunshine and white sand beaches. VL are well known for *Go*, the ear-worm theme to HBO's *Last Week Tonight With John Oliver*, and *Shadows In Paradise* repeats the feat across every one of its 11 tracks, with Cheap Trick and Big Star vibes all over the shop. For effervescent pop-rock kicks it would be tough to beat *Daylights*, *Hanging Around*, *Secret Lover* and *I Wrote a Song*, the latter rather oddly and brilliantly name-checking 80s novelty metallers Thor. Hill conjures up a bit of Bolan-esque vocal magic during *Out Of Time* and *That Love*, but the best track has to be *After School*, all insistent angsty riffs and with a ripping, to-the-point guitar solo.

For sparkling melodies and feelgood atmosphere, *Shadows In Paradise* is second to none.



Essi Berelian

Sonic Universe

It Is What It Is EARMUSIC

Split personality.



A casual listen to this, Sonic Universe's debut album, makes you

wonder why Living Colour vocalist Corey Glover bothered with this side project that sounds almost indistinguishable from the funky hard rock of his day job. But once your ears get into focus the differences become apparent.

Glover's chief collaborator is guitarist Mike Orlando from metal band Adrenaline Mob, who've been inactive since a 2017 road crash killed their bassist and tour manager. Not surprisingly, there's a pent-up energy to the riffs he unleashes at the beginning of each track, and he pays particular attention to the tone on his florid solos. Behind him Booker King plays deep bass and drummer Taykwuan Jackson keeps the rhythms tight and tidy, providing an invigorating platform for Glover to deliver his familiar vocal style and trademark lyrics that veer between the personal and the political.

Given Living Colour's leisurely pace – seven albums in 36 years – it's difficult to accuse Sonic Universe of treading on their toes, and Glover clearly has more than enough ideas to propel both groups – and now has two exceptional guitarists to spark off.



Hugh Fielder

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Johnny Moped

Quonk! DAMAGED GOODS

Croydon-via-Roxy legend Paul Halford returns (at 70) with long-standing guitarist Slimey Toad and their most satisfying release since 1977's *Cycledelic*. An unprecedented musical sophistication fails to sharpen JM's uniquely blunt, punk-savant bludgeoning. **7/10**

Johnny Casino

High Stone CHEERSQUAD

Imbued with hectic 'n' frenetic Iggy (living on the) edginess, nomadic, ex-Asteroid B-612, guitar-slinging Sydney rocker/tattoo artist Casino stokes up an obvious debt to *Nuggets*-era garage with blurts of Farfisa and (digital bonus) an epic assault on *Eight Miles High*. **7/10**

Tommy Hale

All At Sea HOLIDAY DISASTER

From the doggedly riff-driven, thousand-yard staring, Swervedriver insistence of *Hideaway* to the eager-to-please, perk-pop *My Sharona*-ings of *World Won't Wait*, *All At Sea*'s hard to pin down, but Texan Hale's Snakes-supported fourth casually satisfies at every turn. **7/10**

Cuffed Up

All You Got HIT THE NORTH

LA trio Cuffed Up (sparking with 21st-century ambition) are as post-grunge as they're post-punk. Boasting a spikey Brooklyn-loft '03 spirit and a timeless pop-rock heart, they exude arty-smarty ear worms (*Finer Things*, *Mock Dance*) and ample genzennial swagger. **8/10**

Freedom

Stay Free! WILD KINGDOM

Hellacopters' Nicke Andersson once referred to fellow blue-collar Stockholm drive-time rock journeymen Freedom as a "bargain basement Springsteen". Possibly not as backhanded a compliment as 'the Lidl Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers', but if the shit fits... **6/10**

High Noon Kahuna

This Place Is Haunted CRUCIAL BLAST

Who ordered the death-rock surf 'n' turf? While this Maryland trio's bill of fare might sound theoretically unappetising (Dick Dale in a shroud of goth reverb giving it plenty on the post-Christian Death front), in practice it seems to make some sort of morbid sense. **7/10**

Dana Gillespie

First Love FRETSORE

Ex-Mainman starlet Gillespie sells each song (Green Day here, Leonard Cohen there) with experience and aplomb. Bowie's *Can You Hear Me?* shines out, but there's not a dud in sight. Duetting producer Marc Almond rarely hitches his pony to palookas. **7/10**

Jim Keller

Daylight CONTINENTAL SONG CITY

Former Tommy Tutone mainman Keller boasts a lived-in, burnt-out voice, ace understated sidemen (not least, Los Lobos's David Hidalgo) and an irresistible Prine-esque songwriting eccentricity. Rich in character, atmosphere and cooler-than-thou vibes, *Daylight*'s a keeper. **8/10**

Kid Congo & The Pink Monkey Birds

That Delicious Vice IN THE RED

East Of East's vast caverns of reverb introduce this latest from the dark, exotic, 50s-based, pencil-moustached hinterland inhabited by ex-Gun Club/Cramps man Congo. Though neither Pierce nor Interior vocally, his twang's the thang: brooding, epic, immense. **7/10**

Hollywood Stars

Starstruck RUM BAR

Kim Fowley recruited the Stars in '73 to be LA's New York Dolls. Which they weren't. Their first album in 47 years is power-pop by numbers: unremarkable, unpolishable. A valiant enough effort, but no amount of flogging's going to rouse this particular show pony. **5/10**

Hot Water Music

Vows END HITS

Across 10 albums and three decades, instinctively melodic Floridian quintet HWM have defied their duff name to thrive within their packed genre due to a 3 Colours Reddish ear for raw-throated and anthemic hardcore post-punk gold. Of which there's plenty here. **7/10**

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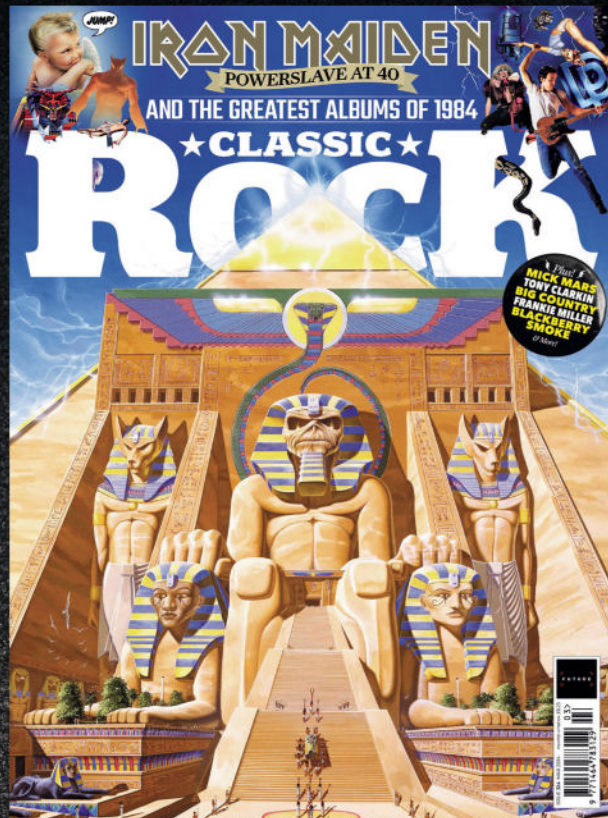


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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES



Billy Idol

Rebel Yell – 40th Anniversary

Deluxe Expanded Edition UME



An 80s hard rock pinnacle, now with extras.

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that Billy Idol's career has not panned out exactly as it might have done. When his *Rebel Yell* album was first released, in November 1983, the former Generation X frontman's transformation into the ultimate MTV-generation rock star seemed complete. With what was then a state-of-the-art production job, the mercurial talents of guitarist Steve Stevens (still at Idol's side today) and some genuinely terrific rock'n'roll songs, it could hardly fail. World domination beckoned. Unfortunately, Idol never quite matched that second solo album's brash magic, and by the 90s his productivity and reputation were in decline. The peroxide hair, the sneer and the leather trousers have remained unerringly iconic, and later studio records like *Devil's Playground* and *Kings And Queens Of The Underground* proved that the old sod has still got it, but *Rebel Yell* will always be the most Billy Idol of Billy Idol moments. And it still sounds phenomenal.

Recorded in New York City, it's a high-resolution barrage of concrete, chrome and neon, with Idol an untamed, preening presence in the foreground. Everyone knows the hits – *Rebel Yell*, *Eyes Without A Face*, the actually quite rude *Flesh For Fantasy* – but the supporting cast are all

heavy hitters too: *Daytime Drama* is a masterfully tense radio-rock slow burner that bears a striking resemblance to what INXS were doing a few years later; *Blue Highway* is a gritty no-nonsense rocker that genuinely seems to be about travelling on a blue highway; and the frantic New York rumble of (Do Not) *Stand In The Shadows* is a classy punk throwback. Meanwhile, austere, quasi-gothic finale *The Dead Next Door* is inexplicably moving for a song that shares vinyl space with *Flesh For* ruddy *Fantasy*.

As devoted Idolators will rightly be expecting, this *40th Anniversary Deluxe Expanded Edition* comes with a generous helping of bonus content. Of the two "bonus tracks", the cloying, overproduced *Best Way Out Of Here* is best ignored, but Idol's version of Rose Royce's 70s hit *Love Don't Live Here Anymore* is magnificently overwrought, and definitely better than Jimmy Nail's. Several pre-album demos serve largely to confirm that Idol and Stevens had their shit together in advance, but a charmless, early version of *Flesh For Fantasy* is so unlike its hit counterpart that you can almost hear it whistling towards the bin. It all turned out well, however, and *Rebel Yell* is back for more (more, and).

Dom Lawson

Pink Floyd

Animals PINK FLOYD MUSIC

The Floyd's epic social satire remixed.



It's one of rock history's greatest ironies that some of the prog

dinosaurs that punk was out to destroy went significantly more noisy and anti-establishment in 1977. Such was the case with Pink Floyd's *Animals*, a new Dolby Atmos Mix of which has been repackaged here for Blu-ray (alongside the 2018 and original 1977 mixes), with striking new artwork.

After the sumptuous ruminations on madness, war and music industry malpractice explored on *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Wish You Were Here*, Roger Waters here concocted a metaphorical critique of capitalism and 1970s society, based loosely on George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*. His pigs represented despotic, self-righteous power figures – politicians, industry leaders, Mary Whitehouse; his dogs were savage and self-serving businessmen; his sheep the deadheaded masses who ultimately rise up against their oppressors. Floyd may have been working in the medium of lengthy song cycles à la *Atom Heart Mother* and *Meddle*, but they were singing from the same song sheet as the Sex Pistols.

Book-ended by the two parts of Waters's solo acoustic romance *Pigs On The Wing*, to suggest that love always wins out over greed and self-interest in the end, *Animals* marked a definitive climax of Pink Floyd's 70s voyages in sound. After *Dogs*, the band's longest ever track, wandered for 17 minutes between *Quadrophonia*-like verses of panicky rat-race desperation and celestial interludes of Gilmour's guitar playing, albums of three-minute songs were the only place left for them to explore, post-Syd. They signed off the cosmic roll-call with several of their most memorable sprawlers, though: *Pigs (Three Different Ones)* is a master class in stretching edgy new-wave rock'n'roll over the 10-minute mark, while *Sheep* is a savage, punkish rampage akin to *One Of These Days*, rewriting *Bible* verses into an abattoir revolution en route to a heroic canyon-riff finale. These dinosaurs had teeth.

Mark Beaumont

UFO

Covent + Sharks HNE

Reissues of 2000 and 2002 albums, plus live set.



Founded in London in 1968 by vocalist Phil Mogg, bassist Pete Way and

drummer Andy Parker, UFO were joined by guitarist Michael Schenker in 1973 but then lost him to his solo project. Come 1995, however, after decades of toil and decreasing relevance, Schenker rejoined.

Covenant (2000) was UFO's fifteenth album. It's generic, reliable, resolutely unremarkable stuff in the main, albeit competently stitched together, and lyrically fraught with the difficulties of dealing with the womenfolk, as on tracks like *Unravelled* and *In The Middle Of Madness*. *Miss The Lights*, meanwhile, reflects honestly, ruefully on the loss of fame.

Sharks (2002) was an improvement, with the line-up seeming to swing with a more assured exuberance, their changes that bit more interesting, as on *Quicksilver Rider*. *Outlaw Man*, which alludes to the 1950s, 'when men were men', is presumably satirical. Its theme is taken up further on *Fighting Man*. The album concludes nicely with the brief, ambient atmospherics of *Hawaii*.

Disc three consists of a live set recorded in 1995 at Blind Melons in NYC, and includes classics such as *Too Hot To Handle*, on which UFO demonstrate their solid chops and ability to engage live.

David Stubbs

Yes

Talk (30th Anniversary)

SPIRIT OF UNICORN

Overlooked and undersold Yes gem gets welcome multi-disc reissue.

It might have been the end of guitarist Trevor Rabin's time in Yes (unless you count the Hall Of Fame appearance), but his piece of the Yes legacy – 90125, *Big Generator* and *Talk* – sound as pristine today as they did in their 80s and 90s heyday. Especially the latter now it's been given a digital makeover, and reissued with two discs of live shows.

It's understandable, though, that Yes post-*Union*, with a multitude of managers, labels and firing and hirings, makes the extended band sound as unsettled and vengeful as the

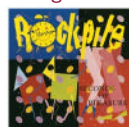
Borgias, but less well put together. The excellent sleeve-notes by *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing make you realise what a sorry mess the band and the industry were at that time. As brilliant and best-selling as the previous decade's *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* single was, it had cast the band in a new mould for a new era, one that music execs were keen to capitalise on.

But what a fist Trevor Rabin and Jon Anderson made of their third album together, book-ended it with the cursory pop single *The Calling* and exploding creatively for the grand finale with the sprawling *Endless Dream*. Those songs still echo strongly, as do this band's imperious live takes on *Heart Of The Sunrise* and *Rhythm Of Love*. Yes born again, old and new.

★★★★★
Philip Wilding

Rockpile

Seconds Of Pleasure YEP ROC
Some pleasure, but not enough of it.



Rockpile were the shadow band of the new-wave era, playing on solo records by band members Nick

Lowe and Dave Edmunds but never able to use their own name thanks to record company shenanigans, and they were both massive and invisible, enjoying Top 10 hits in Europe and America with covers and original material. A true Rockpile album would include Lowe's *Cruel To Be Kind* and Edmunds' *Girls Talk* as well as other hits from the era, and would have demonstrated both Edmunds' love of rock'n'roll pastiche and Lowe's love of, er, rock'n'roll pastiche. But the band were always riven by the fractious relationship between the two frontmen, and by the time they were free to record as Rockpile and release this, their only studio album, it was all over but the thumping.

Seconds Of Pleasure is a perfectly good album of light pub-rocky pop, opening with the catchy *Teacher Teacher* and containing delights like *Heart* and *When I Write The Book* but never really achieving the heights of previous releases, and the whole vibe of the album is that of an under-cooked pub meal. The best thing about the original release was the inclusion of an EP of Everly Brothers covers by Nick and

Dave, which is unfortunately absent from this reissue.

A breezy, pleasant album, but in the end one for the fans only.

★★★★★
David Quantick

McCoy

The Sound Of Thunder!

CHERRY RED

Three-CD set of solo works by former Gillan bassist.



After Gillan split, their bassist John McCoy revealed deeper talents as a songwriter and producer. In 1983 he made a five-song mini-album with his ex-Gillan bandmate Colin Towns (keyboards) and long-time friend Paul Samson on guitar, plus drummer Ron Rebel and singer Tony 'T Bone' Rees.

The first of *The Sound Of Thunder!*'s three discs includes their mini-album plus the (originally shelved) full-length debut *Think Hard*. Highlights are an eight-minute version of Fleetwood Mac's *Oh Well*, *Because You Lied* (inspired by Ian Gillan's role in the split) and *Dreaming Of The Dead*. CD2 has the follow-up *Brainstorm* featuring *Outrageous* and *Save*

Me (belatedly first released in 1998), with McCoy playing bass, rhythm guitar and keyboards, alongside Al Romano on lead guitar, as the Heavy Metal Cowboys. Documenting McCoy's part in the origins of NWOBHM band Samson, the third disc – recorded at a 1977 gig by McCoy and Paul Samson – is lo-fi and less approachable. The first two, though, sound box-fresh. The rock they contain – slightly quirky in places, but almost universally good and timeless – simply fell through the cracks, a victim of bad luck and bad timing.

Worth reinvestigation.

★★★★★
Neil Jeffries

Carmen

The Albums 1973-1975

ESOTERIC

Exhilaratingly eccentric prog-flamenco outfit.



Around the time that Tony Visconti was producing *Tanx* for a perma-drunk Marc Bolan and arranging strings for Wings' *Band On The Run*, he was also doing something weird. Carmen were a Californian flamenco-prog

quintet who came to London, befriended glam-rockers, and prevailed upon Visconti to produce their first two albums.

The first was 1973's adorably titled *Fandangos In Space*. Bustling with songs about bullfights, sailors and the band's romantic perception of Spain, it's brilliantly bonkers even by the era's standards. Carmen had two dancers who in concert would stomp on amplified stages as part of their sound. They're all over the album, too, which with synths, Mellotrons and the adrenalinised bass playing of John Glascock (later of Jethro Tull), isn't exactly reticent anyway. Visconti had some plate-juggling to do. *Fandangos In Space* bewilders, then irritates, then reaches a point where resistance collapses. It's as breathtaking as it is absurd.

Also restless on this three-CD set is the follow-up, 1974's *Dancing On A Cold Wind*, where Visconti has somewhat, though not entirely, calmed them. *The Gypsies* ('75) was recorded in the US, and its folk rock feels as though Carmen knew their dance was done. They left it all out on the floor, though.

★★★★★
Chris Roberts

Robin Trower

Bridge Of Sighs (50th Anniversary Edition)

CHRYSLIS

British guitar hero's finest hour, expanded.

Possibly peaking too soon, Robin Trower's career-defining second album, came out in 1974 and propelled him into the pantheon of the Second Wave Of British Blues Guitarists.

Bridge Of Sighs never made the British chart, but spent over five months in the US chart, reaching No. 7. The snobby British blues clique branded him a Hendrix copyist without bothering to listen beneath the surface. Sure, Trower sounded like Hendrix, but he certainly didn't play like him, eschewing Hendrix's fuzz and feedback, and focusing on the reverberation from his own Stratocaster, his distinctive use of the whammy bar and his own melodic sense with its emphasis on single notes and tone.

Bridge Of Sighs also added a new dimension to the concept of a power trio, broadening the boundaries from the opening *Day Of The Eagle* with its strong, speedy riff before Trower launches into a blistering solo. He then takes the tempo right down without dropping the intensity in preparation for the slow and lugubrious title track. And you become aware of

how well Trower's guitar dovetails with bassist Jimmy Dewar's alcohol-soaked vocals as he sings: '*The sun don't move, the moon don't move the tides to wash me clean.*' Heart's Ann Wilson, who covered the song on her 2022 *Fierce Bliss* album, says it's "one of the best blues songs ever written". Steve Lukather, who featured it on his *I Found The Sun Again* album a year earlier, would doubtless concur, and you'll also find it as a hidden track on Metallica's 1998 covers album *Garage Inc.*

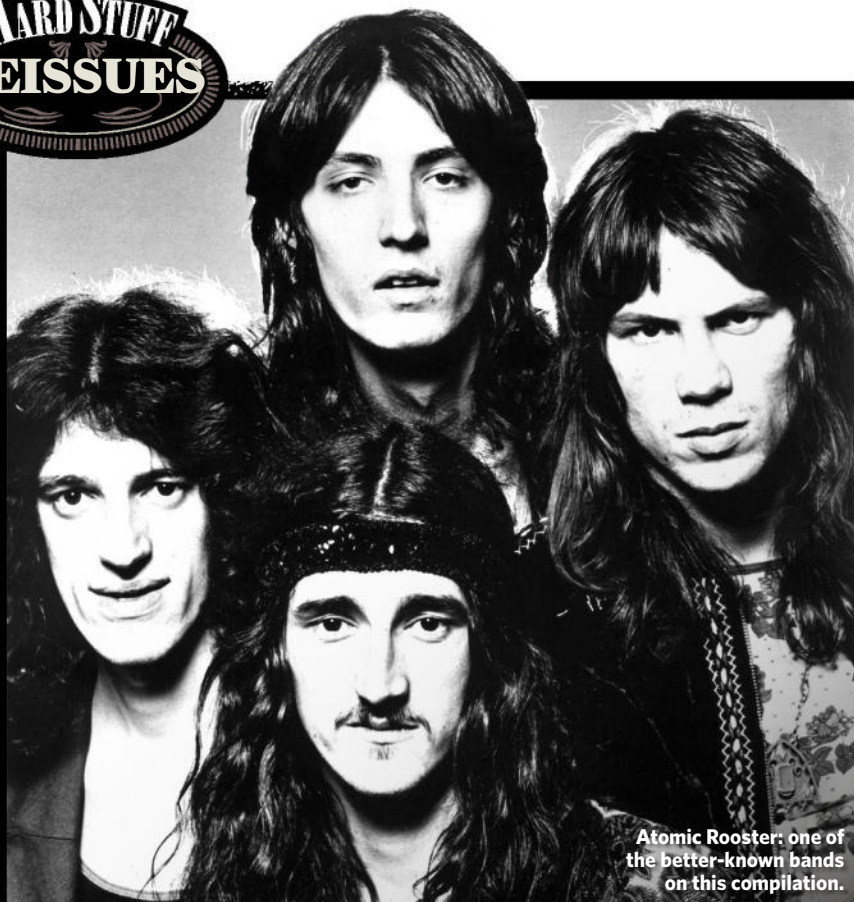
The other standout track is the funk-tinged *Too Rolling Stoned*, which again switches tempo midway through, allowing Trower to cruise leisurely into a state of bliss. But in truth there's scarcely a dud among the eight tracks, all of which have a one-take feel to them, giving the album a live-in-the-studio immediacy.

The first CD of this four-disc set remasters the original mix, the second remixes the original tapes, broadening the sound and separating the instruments without losing the density of



sound, and the third has a 1974 live US radio show from the Record Plant in Sausalito. There are also numerous previously unreleased out-takes and alternative and instrumental versions spread around. The fourth, Blu-ray, disc with its 5.1 mix is a blast for audiophiles.

★★★★★
Hugh Fielder



Atomic Rooster: one of the better-known bands on this compilation.

Various

Incident At A Free Festival ACE

Wot, no Gordon Giltrap?

Let's face it, this rock festival malarkey has gotten way out of hand. Too corporate, too ginormous, too many bands, too many stages, too many people in rainbow wellies practising goat yoga in air-conditioned yurts...

This album is a reminder of simpler, more ramshackle times, when all you needed was a field (a meadow, for those of a prog inclination), an electricity generator, some scaffolding and Stack Waddy to make a happening happen. Forget tofu, let's hear it for Snafu!

This writer assumed initially that *Incident At A Free Festival* was a collection of live recordings resurrected from long-ago Lollapaloozas. We expected to hear 'Jesus' rattling his tambourine and cries of "Wally!" Fact is, it's a straightforward (if determinedly eclectic) compilation of studio cuts from the era, a *Now That's What I Call Music!* for the loon-pant generation.

Masterminded by Bob Stanley and Pete Wiggs of Saint Etienne, *Incident* focuses on the mid-afternoon slots at Deeply Vale, Bickershaw, Krumlin, Weeley, Plumpton and the like, and features tracks from those halfway-house bands charged with getting a slumbering crowd up and groovin' before the headliners. The vibe is summed up by the aforementioned Stack Waddy: *Meat Pies Ave Come But Bands Not Ere Yet*, a haphazard freak-out (think

Medicine Head-meets-Primal Scream-via-John Kongos) that reeks of patchouli oil and Bhutanese incense.

Still, we'd argue that some of the track inclusions are rather too obvious: Curved Air's *Back Street Luv*; Edgar Broughton Band's *Out Demons Out*; Atomic Rooster's *Tomorrow Night*; Hawkwind's *Ejection*. There's also the questionable presence of Deep Purple's *Chasing Shadows*, from the band's self-titled third album.

The obscurities provide the delight: May Blitz's pummelling *For Mad Men Only* (imagine Phil Mogg fronting Black Sabbath); James Hogg's stoned Elvis impersonation on *Lovely Lady Rock*; Paladin's War-like *Third World*; Dave Richmond's lumbering cosmic instrumental *Confunktion*; Slowload's magnificently non-PC *Big Boobs Boogie*, produced by Vic Maile of Motörhead/Girlschool notoriety. (As the press release points out: "One for the girls in knee-high boots who wanted to wiggle their hips.")

This must surely be the start of a series. We fully expect Vol. 2 to include Nutz, Budgie, Aj Webber, Audience, Cochise, East Of Eden, Byzantium, Skin Alley and Hustler (formerly Flesh). This one could go on and on. Much like Third Ear Band at Hyde Park in 1970, in fact.



Geoff Barton



Danko Jones

Electric Sounds

Deluxe Version AFM

Toronto's rock renegades beef up their latest.

Canada's hardest-working power trio, Danko Jones have been a relentless force throughout their career, and their last few albums have been particularly lethal. *Electric Sounds* is among the best of them

First released in 2023, it stuck proudly to a formula that has served the band well for over 25 years: balls-out rock'n'roll with massive hooks and a mischievous glint in its eye. Right now, nobody does it better, and songs as absurdly catchy as *Good Time, Get High?* and *Let's Make Out* should probably be regarded as scientific proof. From the goofy, hardcore dirt-rock of *She's My Baby* to wild-eyed, belligerent finale *Shake Your City*, *Electric Sounds* is a beautiful, exhilarating thing, and gains little from being re-released with bonus tracks other than to receive a well-deserved commercial push. Thankfully, new songs *Waiting For You* and *Haunting Me* are hard-edged, fiery additions. Both will also be available on a limited-edition vinyl EP alongside two exclusive live tracks. More Danko can only ever be a good thing.



Dom Lawson

Orquesta Del Desierto

Reissues HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Brace of albums from Palm Desert project.

Orquesta Del Desierto were founded by Dandy Brown and included ex-members of Yawning Man, Queens Of The Stone Age and Goatsnake, among others, and their psych-rock sound is redolent of that Southern California desert region where the air is distantly spiced with Latino elements.

Recorded in Palm Springs and released in 2002, their self-titled debut album (**7/10**) hits the ground running with *Shadow Stealing*, and its breakneck, tequila-sodden, blurry evocations of the Coachella Valley. *Alicia* and *After Blue* are more pensive, soulful, enhanced by Pete Stahl's lucid, affecting vocals, while *Globalist Dreams* reaches fraught, unearthly heights.

Dos (**7/10**) followed in 2003. *Life Without Color* is fuelled with mariachi energy with an idealistic dose of psych -

'Everyone's hands in the rainbow', Stahl sings. *Summer* evokes sitting on the rooftop watching the Moon, letting the music and your thoughts drift, while the motorik *El Diablo* leaves scorch tracks in the open sand. Still, with *What In The World* there is a sense that Orquesta Del Desierto are driving round in circles, albeit gigantic ones - that they had said and done all that they had to say and do within these two fine albums, after which they wisely disbanded.

David Stubbs

Laibach

Opus Dei (Remastered/Expanded) MUTE

Expanded third featuring the best Queen cover... ever!



Having finally emerged, apparently fully formed, from almost

impenetrable post-industrial roots with second album *Nova Akropolis*'s uniquely disturbing, resistance crushing, Alpine-horns-ahoy single *Die Liebe*, Slovenian/Yugoslav, avant-garde experimentalists Laibach signed a deal with Mute Records and set about expanding their maximalist neo-classical, samples-heavy totalitarian vision yet further.

In a move that might be termed 'unlikely' (if we were talking about almost any other combo extant), the ever-unreadable Laibach applied their characteristically immense, profoundly stern, martial production methods to a pair of cover versions: Austrian pop-rock combo Opus's mind-numbingly repetitious *Live Is Life* has its anodyne chorus translated into the guttural German-language *Leben Heißt Leben* and ominously barked over a distinctly Wagnerian backdrop by intimidating basso-profundo frontman Milan Fras. Better still, Queen's *One Vision* metamorphoses into the implausibly huge *Geburt Einer Nation* (*Birth Of A Nation*), the sonic equivalent of being repeatedly pummelled about the head and neck with five Panzer divisions, a gross of anvils and an entire World Snooker Championship's worth of leaden pool balls in a double-knotted Winstone-wielded steel-wool windsock.

Elsewhere on this remastered, redesigned, expanded (with alt. mixes and contemporary live performances) edition, there's *The Great Seal* (the Neue

Slowerische Kunst State national anthem, with lyrics filched lock, stock and jingo from Winston Churchill's "We will fight them on the beaches" speech), and a drum sound that'll (very probably) make your bowels fall out of your bum.

An industrial essential.



Ian Fortnam

Company Of Wolves

Shakers & Tamborines

BAD REPUTATION

Give the wolves a chance.



Every rock'n'roll writer has their list of coulda-beens, and Company Of Wolves has always been at the top of mine. New York hard rockers with AOR leanings, they were unfairly tossed in with the soon-to-be-extinct glam-metal hordes, which did them no favours as they weren't glam and they weren't metal. Their penchant for memorable choruses, blood-rushing riffs and hard-luck lyrics were an irresistible combination, a sorta street-savvy .38 Special with a full barrel of ear-wormy smashes. Their stellar debut, 1990's *Company Of Wolves*, was packed with hook-heavy rockers built for heavy radio rotation, but it fizzled everywhere except for my teenage bedroom.

Shakers & Tamborines (1997) contains the demos that got them signed to Mercury Records back in '88. It includes the original versions of *The Distance* and *Everybody's Baby*, as well as songs that never made the album, or became different songs by the time they recorded it. This welcome reissue remasters the tracks to a crystal sheen, and includes as a bonus the previously unreleased *Company Of Wolves*. As with any demo collection, it doesn't flow as well as the album. Still, it should shed some light on a band that would've rocked arenas throughout the 90s.



Sleazegrinder

Angelic Upstarts

Teenage Warning CAPTAIN OIL

Punching post-Pistols punk.



There was an intensity to the Angelic Upstarts that set them apart from other second-wave punk bands, most of which came from their singer Thomas

'Mensi' Mensforth. Mensi sang like a man being taken away to be shot. For him there was no irony or distance to what he did. He thrived on confrontation and directness (and the occasional pig's head on stage was almost as striking as he was).

Teenage Warning was their first album and their most successful, with its fantastic punk-metal single *I'm An Upstart*. It outstrips the work of its mentor Jimmy Pursey in sheer phlegm with songs as splenetic as *Student Power* and the furious *Liddle Towers*.

Always struggling to keep out of the mire of Oi!, the Upstarts deserved more than the 'terrace-punk' label, and later singles like *I Understand* demonstrated a compassion and thoughtfulness along with the anger and spit. Meanwhile, despite a cover of Cliff Richard's *The Young Ones*, which is a curious concession to comedy, *Teenage Warning* stands as a forceful reminder that not all post-Pistols punk was thuggish and dull.

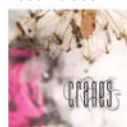


David Quantick

Cranes

Fuse DADAPHONIC

Unique dream-pop debut resurfaces.



Reinvigorated by a return to playing live, Portsmouth's agreeably creepy Cranes accelerate an ongoing reissue outbreak with the resurrection of their rare, garage-recorded debut. Capturing tentative baby steps and first self-released on cassette in 1986, *Fuse* lit the interest of the imaginative, if not yet the industry. Siblings Alison and Jim Shaw sketched a stark, penumbral sound here that welded together insistent rhythms and Alison's remarkable voice, already intent on finding unprecedented textures

It's too simplistic to label this goth, despite The Cure's subsequent endorsement. These 28 minutes are ardently consistent in mood, from the skinny metallic scurrying of *Pillow Panther* to the echoing PIL-meets-Neu! slow dazzle of *Gas-Ring*. The title track offers a hint of how they'd develop, as the voice suggests enigmatic intrigues over a back beat that essentially wants to cause physical harm. *Fracture*, meanwhile, feels like a test run for their later inimitable knack for pairing the grace of Cocteau

Twins with the gut punches of Pixies. Previously unreleased track *New Liberty* foreshadows their (relatively) softer, melodic mid-90s music.

To sceptics, Cranes might forever sound like a cat trapped in a bin. But with new artwork and immortal strangeness this reissue represents sacred scriptures for aficionados.



Chris Roberts

Poobah

Burning In The Rain: A Poobah Anthology

RIPPLE MUSIC

Cult post-psych band's back cat raided, with emphasis on latter-day material.

After Ohio band Poobah's psych-informed, hard-rocking 1972 debut album *Let Me In* made a significant impression on the Midwest scene, they built a formidable live reputation supporting the likes of Judas Priest, Alice Cooper and ZZ Top. Alas, with line-up turbulence and imploding record labels they lost commercial momentum, and split by the late 70s.

Main man Jim Gustafson kept the faith, though, and continued making records under the Poobah name, eventually putting out 10 self-released albums. Meanwhile, *Let Me In* and its 1976 follow-up *U.S. Rock* were reissued on Ripple Music in 2010 and 2015 respectively, rekindling interest in the band.

The same label put this collection together – and curiously don't mention that it's made up of mostly the band's later material. Of the 17 tracks here, only the compelling Hawkwind-y slog *Mr Destroyer* is included from *Let Me In*, and although there's another archive highlight in the seven-minute 1979 prog-stoner odyssey *Jump Thru The Golden Ring*, the material since is rarely so characterful, with a few exceptions. *Maximum Pleasure* (2018) could be a Queens Of The Stone Age number, *My Name Is Mud* from the same period has a likeable bluesy swagger, while the chugging malevolence of 1998's *2 Faced Liar* and 2012's Sabbath-channelling *I Want Peace* are also arresting. It's never going to be the material on which their reputation rests, but it's still worth a listen for anyone wanting to hear what Poobah did next.



Johnny Sharp

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

David Bowie

Diamond Dogs PARLOPHONE

Released (again) to mark its 50th, on half-speed remastered black vinyl or pic disc, Dave's first post-Ronson album (a post-Burroughs/Orwell vision of street-wise canine dystopia) reliably shines, but another remaster? 'This ain't rock'n'roll. This is...' milking it. **9/10**

The Fall

Live At The Witch Trials CHERRY RED

The mighty Fall's '79 debut LP, back on black in its US-vinyl I.R.S. 10-track form, remains as acerbic and jarring as ever-ah. Though Mark E's audible sneer predominates, Bramah and Riley's wilful, itchy, Magic Band scratch 'n' riff guitar and bass interplay never gets old. **7/10**

UK Subs

The Albums 1979-82 CAPTAIN OIL

With all due respect to the sainted Charlie Harper, these five newly clamshelled albums, now fully equipped with all the band's heyday hits (*C.I.D.*, *Stranglehold*, *Tomorrow's Girls* etc) are all you really need of the street-punk exemplars' copious '78-'22 back catalogue. **7/10**

Warhorse

The Recordings 1970-1972 ESOTERIC

With a bassist (Nick Simper) who'd been sacked by Purple, a drummer (Mac Poole) who'd turned down Zeppelin, Heepy hard rockers Warhorse lost Rick Wakeman to Yes after one demo and were dropped by Vertigo after two chart-missing albums... It's a shit business. **6/10**

Lindisfarne

Brand New Day: Mercury Years 1978-1979 LEMON

Fans of vintage Lindisfarne might balk at a three-CD set covering their relatively slim '78-79 re-formed incarnation (a couple of albums noteworthy only for sole transatlantic hit single *Run For Home*). Luckily, disc one documents a hit-packed '77 Newcastle City Hall show. **7/10**

Edgar Broughton Band

Gone Blue BBC Sessions ESOTERIC

Wildly extemporising like an unholy progeny of Arthur Brown and Nick Cave, reliably underachieving UK underground demon magnet Broughton did an awful lot of air-filling sessions for a pre-punk Peel adrift in a post-psych hell. Four further-than-far-out discs. **6/10**

GBH

Complete Singles CAPTAIN OIL

Birmingham UK82 pioneers GBH's M.O. turned many a Clash-weaned '77 punk into their dad: it's too fast; I can't understand a bloody word. Two CDs, 37 bloody rackets (*No Survivors*, *Give Me Fire*, *Sick Boy*). Rancid? Their fault. All of thrash metal? Probably. **7/10**

Snafu

You Know It Ain't Easy: Anthology GRAPEFRUIT

Complete box comprising all three albums, singles, radio sessions, out-takes and live recordings from pre-Whitesnake Micky Moody's self-defeatingly eclectic, mid-70s support-slot stalwarts. A little bit country, a tad R&B, adequately adept, boogie lite, proto-pub rock. **6/10**

Various

No Songs Tomorrow: Darkwave, Ethereal Rock and Coldwave 1981-1990 CHERRY RED

Indebted to Sioux, Curtis, Bauhaus and, inevitably, Bowie, the alt.80s saw a whole raft of goth-curious, romantically inclined, glum-sexy bedsit dreamers whose atmospheric post-punk vision was invariably refracted through an ash-tinted lens. Here's four CDs of them. **7/10**

Vibrators

The Singles 1976-2017 CAPTAIN OIL

At the dawn of UK punk, bandwagon jumpers were frowned upon. The finger of suspicion soon fell on the Vibrators because they were questionably deft with a dynamite hook. Nigh on five decades later, no one cares, and three CDs of good tunes are just that. **7/10**

John Lee Hooker

Burning Hell BLUESVILLE

Hugely influential on the nascent British Blues scene, 1964's *Burning Hell* (recorded in '59) features stripped-to-the-bone takes on *Baby*, *Please Don't Go*, *Key To The Highway* and *Natchez Fire* (Burnin'). Raw, primal stuff. **8/10**



Catching Fire: The Story Of Anita Pallenberg

Dir: Alexis Bloom, Svetlana Zill

A film about Keith Richards' ex-wife also gives a rare behind-the-scenes look at peak-time Stones.



“I was bursting with love for Anita,” Keith Richards recalls wistfully on the audio track to Alexis Bloom and Svetlana Zill’s highly engaging documentary portrait of Anita Pallenberg, the fast-living German-Italian beauty who became the blueprint for every bohemian rock-star muse to follow. Full of previously unseen material, including extensive private video footage from the Richards family archive, *Catching Fire* is a rare insight behind the scenes of the Rolling Stones at their debauched peak. It paints Pallenberg as an integral member of the band’s creative chemistry, amplifying their aristocratic glamour and satanic majesty. But the filmmakers also want to reclaim and re-frame Pallenberg from male-dominated rock mythology – not just a background figure in a junkie soap opera, but a smart, charismatic, influential counterculture figure in her own right.

Alongside audio interviews with Richards, Marianne Faithfull and others, Scarlett Johansson plays Pallenberg effectively, narrating extracts from her unpublished memoir. These juicy first-hand insights are a major selling point, and Johansson is a starry casting coup, although it seems strange to use her own American accent rather than approximating Pallenberg’s Euro-vamp growl. Marlon Richards, son of Keith and Anita, is an executive producer and on-screen interviewee, which helps

explain the glittering treasure trove of rare photos and home videos here.

The film revisits some notorious incidents with an unsensational eyewitness tone: Pallenberg’s early romantic intoxication with her “twin”, Brian Jones, which soured into addiction and abuse; the fabled road trip to Morocco, when she effectively dumped Jones for Richards; her sexual entanglement with Mick Jagger while shooting the 1970 film *Performance*; the hair-raising drug busts and enforced exile that came to define what Richards calls the duo’s “Bonnie and Clyde” period; the gunshot death of Pallenberg’s teenage lover Scott Cantrell in 1979, apparently during a game of Russian roulette; and more.

Despite noble intentions to paint a fully rounded portrait of Pallenberg, who died in 2017, the filmmakers inevitably focus mostly on her Stones-muse years. Her post-rehab third act, especially her 90s reinvention as a London fashion student and self-spoofing *Absolutely Fabulous* icon, merits more than the perfunctory treatment it receives here, although at least Kate Moss gives welcome testimony as a late-career friend and champion. But whatever its blind spots, *Catching Fire* is still a classy, diligent and emotionally rich documentary. Not quite the Anita film we might want, but probably the one we need.

■■■■■■■■■■
Stephen Dalton

All You Need Is Love: The End Of The Beatles

Peter Brown & Steven Gaines MONORAY

Not quite what the title promises, but...



In 1983, American journalist and Alice Cooper’s ghostwriter Steven Gaines, and Peter Brown (head of Apple Records; John and Yoko’s best man) published the hugely entertaining, mildly scurrilous *The Love You Make: An Insider’s Story Of The Beatles*. All these years later, they’ve returned to that book’s interviews, conducted shortly before John Lennon’s death, plus one with Yoko Ono a few months afterwards and a brief transcript of a Brian Epstein recording from 1966, and repackaged them, one Q&A chapter per interviewee.

There’s Paul and George and Ringo (but no John), assorted inner-circle members and even the equally maligned and feared Allen Klein: “When I heard Brian died [I thought] ‘I got ‘em!’”

It’s hardly the end-of-days account the misleading subtitle promises (the American publishers plumped for the similarly inaccurate title *The Beatles In Their Own Words*), but it’s every bit as mischievous as its predecessor, a cornucopia of contrasting, almost wholly self-serving views of the same events.

So what do we learn other than that The Beatles played The Cavern 292 times? Simply that beneath the drama, the problem with The Beatles was simple and mundane. George’s former wife Pattie Boyd nails it: “They disagreed with each other a bit too much”.

■■■■■■■■■■
John Aizlewood

Three And A Half Minutes Of Fame

Alex Boucher EARTH ISLAND

All the young dudes.



Drummer Alex Boucher earned his stripes playing in a couple of failed punk/grunge bands in the early 90s, and here he provides a revealing and unflinching account of group dynamics, the relentless battle between principles and wanting to make it, the grass-roots gigging circuit from Harlow The Square to Dudley JBs, tour supports, promoters (“I’m not paying you, you didn’t bring

anybody”), life in the van, record companies big and small, recording studios from the legendary Rockfield in Wales to Purple Rain in Great Yarmouth, the music press... His recall is depressingly vivid.

After quitting for the second time, Boucher’s quest for fame leads him to an abortive boy-band project, when he should have been looking for a Britpop band that better suited his musical tastes. He even asks himself that question, without coming up with an answer.

But don’t worry for him. He’s now married with kids and a successful job in TV. Life’s like that.

■■■■■■■■■■
Hugh Fielder

A Dysfunctional Success: A Wreckless Eric Manual

Eric Goulden DO NOT PRESS



Oh, but this is a blast. As quirky and individual and bittersweet and happy-sad, and full

of diversions and terraced suburbs and addiction and sweet, sweet pop music as ‘Wreckless’ Eric Goulden himself. As author Neil Gaiman points out, if you come to this book expecting insight into the early days of Stiff Records (Eric’s first label, home to his mega-cult 70s hit *Whole Wide World*), you might leave disappointed. What you get is far richer, far more rewarding, “a shambling, acutely observed, very funny-sad-true-sharp autobiography”.

Twenty years or so after its initial publication, it’s so brilliantly readable. Just the opening chapter talking about such things as *Reader’s Digest* Record Club and washing day will have you in stitches. And that’s before he moves on to the music, the squalid flats, menial jobs, flirtation with fame, and the inexorable ridiculousness of life and alcohol itself.

■■■■■■■■■■
Everett True

Louder Than Words: Beyond The Backstage Pass

Joe Matera EMPIRE PUBLISHING

Entertaining account of life beyond the dressing-room door.

As both music journalist and musician, Joe Matera combines a passionate love of music with an insider’s view of the pop

process. In this book, interview reminiscences pinball between rock stalwarts such as America, The Doobie Brothers and a tetchy Gene Simmons, to indie also-rans Phantom Planet and Kiwi outfit Betchadupa. Most interesting are the author's own experiences, sharing dressing rooms with the likes of Canned Heat (argumentative) and The Animals (affable). An in-depth analysis of why Billy Squier's career went south (blame MTV) and a lengthy investigation of Bryan Adams's enduring appeal might not be to everyone's taste, but Matera's love of his subject makes this a fun read for anyone who dreams of life on the tour bus.



Paul Moody

Back On The Streets: The Gary Moore Story

Brian Ireland WYMER PUBLISHING

Matter-of-fact account of the late guitar legend's career.

As Brian Ireland points out in the preface of this book, his biography of Gary Moore is not like the three other accounts of the Northern Irish guitar ace's life and career published in the past two years. While admitting that Moore's life story surely informed his art, he claims he has no wish to delve into Moore's personal life, but to focus on his recording career.

It's a worthy but dull approach. And also, one suspects, a bit of a cop-out. Because while he has diligently researched contemporaneous music-press coverage to back up his rather cautiously expressed Gary-might-have-been-feeling-this-way perspectives, the book isn't based on new material or interviews with those who knew Moore. That's one reason why it lacks any revelations or much insight into the man behind the music. As such it seems only to skim the surface of what is a more intriguing story.



Johnny Sharp

Nickelback

Hate To Love

GIMME SUGAR/TRAFALGAR

Mildly eye-opening documentary on rock's eternal whipping boys.



That title acknowledges the elephant in the room upfront. *Hate To Love* charts Nickelback's rise from the backwater town of Hanna,

Alberta to become the most successful and most vilified hard rock band of the 21st century.

The 90-minute film is split between standard story-of-the-band puff-piece narrative and something more interesting. Frontman Chad Kroeger, so often the focal point for the haters, is a fascinating character: funny, charismatic, sometimes smug, but also clearly hurt by the constant beatings doled out to his band. "I don't have an identity without this band," he says at one point. There are other moments of unexpected drama, not least bassist Mike Kroeger's near-fatal stroke (something he's never talked about publicly).

Hate To Love falls down on the first part of its title – there's no interrogation as to why they became rock's great whipping boys, beyond some vague guff from partisan talking heads about them supposedly being 'corporate rock'. But by the time the Kroegers return to their childhood home at the film's conclusion, it's difficult not to like them.



Dave Everley

Not On The Heep: The Heavy Metal Saga Of Lee Kerslake

Dir: Tayla Goodman

WIENERWORLD

Very 'umble, very 'eavy, and mortal.



A poignant documentary that follows the legendary Uriah Heep drummer, who died in 2020, through his final years as he copes with terminal cancer, reminisces about his life, and completes his bucket list of projects that includes a solo album (released after his death), and stands on stage with Uriah Heep one more time, at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire in 2018.

Despite the millions of albums Uriah Heep sold, Kerslake had little money to show for it. Much of it went on a ruinous legal battle with Sharon Osbourne over credits and royalties on the first two Blizzard Of Ozz albums. Remarkably, he has forgiven her.

Among those reminiscing with Kerslake are Deep Purple's Ian Paice, Joe Elliott, Mick Box, Ken Hensley, and all four members of Kiss who supported Heep on their first US tour.



Hugh Fielder



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Included «A Night In The Life Of A Blues Singer» & «Parisienne Walkways»



SILVER HORSES

Featuring Jacopo Jack Meille (TYGERS OF PAN TANG)

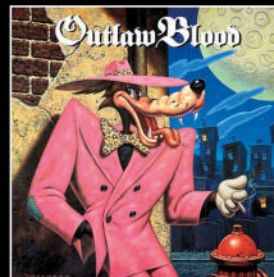
THIRD EFFORT BY THE ITALIAN-ENGLISH BAND



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Bryan Adams has turned in some of the best blue-collar rock out there.

Bryan Adams

There are infinitely more highlights in the Canadian singer-songwriter's bulging catalogue than just 'that song'. Read on...

To the transient fans who jumped on his wagon for the paydirt of the early 90s, a Bryan Adams buyer's guide is a short conversation: simply seek out *Waking Up The Neighbours*, stream *Reckless* highlights *Heaven*, *Summer Of '69* and *Run To You*, and your work is done.

Seasoned Adams watchers, however, know better. Long before – and sporadically after – those chart-residing, till-ringing years, Adams turned in some of the best blue-collar rock out there, his mission statement always to produce hardy, hooky, no-nonsense music that was worth his audience's time and money. "For me," he reflected, "there was no message, no trying to be a man of the people. I was just trying to write great songs."

Adams once said that he "came from absolutely nothing". That's not quite true, but his background as an itinerant military kid, and modest aspirations to be a guitar-playing sideman, gave little indication of the future solo phenomenon whose 15-million-selling anthem (*Everything I Do*) *I Do It For You* would end up feeling like the theme tune to *Top Of The Pops* in the summer of 1991. The turning point early in his career, he told *Classic Rock*, was meeting older industry head Jim Vallance, who helped the still-teenage

songwriter "filter out the shite" and channel his talents.

"The first day we got together, I knew that he was going places," Vallance once recalled. "He was only eighteen but he was overflowing with confidence. Not in an arrogant way, more like bursting with energy and ideas. Right away I'm thinking: 'Wow, this kid can sing and write songs.'"

Enduringly prolific – in the past decade alone now the 64-year-old Adams has released four albums and written a *Pretty Woman* musical – he has the ability to sell even a mediocre song, thanks to a vocal that is probably what most of us would land on when asked to imagine the quintessential stadium-rock rasp.

But at points in his career – and particularly during the decade-plus hot streak from '83 to '96, when his writing partnerships with Vallance and big-name producer Robert 'Mutt' Lange were at their most fruitful – he has proved himself a rare craftsman, equally adept at wistful ballads as sanguine rockers, always able to tap into the universal emotions that fill stadiums and soundtrack life events.

Here's how you should approach the life's work of Bryan.

Henry Yates

Essential Classics



Cuts Like A Knife

1983, A&M

Worn raw by the road, Adams recorded this breakthrough third album on home turf at Vancouver's Little Mountain studio, where his partnership with Jim Vallance audibly started to cook, the pair knocking out set-list staples like *This Time* and the album's title track (although it was local singer-songwriter Eric Kagna's ballad *Straight From The Heart* that set the boulder rolling down the hill). With the album having sold a million copies, the only kicker came on the financial end, Adams realising he'd signed a "really shitty" record deal – and would only be saved by the songs still in his back pocket.

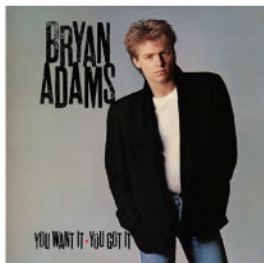


Reckless

1984, A&M

Playing like a greatest hits – it was mined for six singles – *Reckless* was a naked shot at the big time, Adams literally road-testing each song in his car to assess how it might land with drive-time listeners. The feather-soft piano ballad *Heaven* set the tone, before manager Bruce Allen's complaint – "Where's the rock?" – sent his charge back to the studio to write the AC/DC-styled *Kids Wanna Rock* and pump up the volume on latent headbangers *Summer Of '69* and *One Night Love Affair*. It changed the vibe entirely, and *Reckless* became unstoppable, shifting 12 million copies and keeping Adams out on the road for two years.

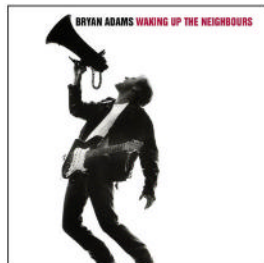
Superior Reputation cementing



You Want It You Got It

1981, A&M

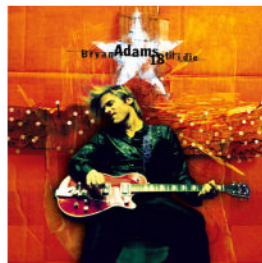
Adams's self-titled debut album had been such a dud, that his gallows-humour working title for the follow-up was *Bryan Adams Hasn't Heard Of You Either* (until his label had a word). Commercially there would be no reprieve – nobody outside Canada, it seemed, wanted it, and this second release stalled outside the US Top 100. But at least Adams was starting to sound like himself, thanks largely to producer Bob Clearmountain, and there are some cracking moments you've either forgotten or never heard, including superior jangle-rockers *Lonely Nights* and *Don't Look Now*.



Waking Up The Neighbours

1991, A&M

Having wound down his partnership with Vallance, Adams locked into an instant groove with Mutt Lange. And while *Waking Up The Neighbours* is a few notches below *Reckless* and *...Knife*, it's hard to argue with dazzlers like *Can't Stop This Thing We Started*, *Thought I'd Died And Gone To Heaven* and *There Will Never Be Another Tonight*. As for *(Everything I Do) I Do It For You*, the official line is that everybody is thoroughly sick of this slushy track from *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*, but try telling us you don't still feel a shiver when the bass slides in for that glorious second verse.



18 Til I Die

1996, A&M

In the five years after *Waking Up The Neighbours* – a period in which grunge had come and gone – Adams's modus operandi hadn't changed a jot. And while America was turning away (*18 Til I Die* peaked at US#31), European fans snapped up an underrated gem whose highlights include the flamenco courtship dance of *Have You Ever Really Loved A Woman?* and the insistent stomp of *The Only Thing That Looks Good On Me Is You*. Sung by a man pushing 40, the bratty title track sailed just the right side of ridiculous, while the less said about the pervy (*I Wanna Be*) *Your Underwear*, the better.



So Happy It Hurts

2022, BMG

By now increasingly in demand for his photography skills – and with his late-period albums more serviceable than spectacular – little more was expected from Adams than a circling of wagons. What did we know. At first glance, *So Happy It Hurts* felt like a sarcastic album title, but Adams was sincere, leading us out of lockdown with a collection of escapist anthems. From the title track's gloriously clichéd open-road rock ('*Top down, I got the radio on, alright!*') to the rip-it-up riot of *Kick Ass*, this was exactly the record we needed, precisely when we needed it.

Good Worth exploring



Into The Fire

1987, A&M

Adams's reaction to the mass acclaim of *Reckless* was to tear up almost everything expected from him on the follow-up. Vallance isn't a fan, writing on his website that this album marked "the moment we disappeared up our own fundamental apertures and re-emerged in *The Land That Fun Forgot*". It's true that the themes were weighty, from the WWI-themed *Remembrance Day* to the reservation observations of *Native Son*. But *Into The Fire* holds proof that Adams can write songs about more than nostalgia and primal urges, and some of his most winning cult cuts are here, like the up-and-at-'em *Rebel* and Stones-tooled *Hearts On Fire*.



On A Day Like Today

1998, A&M

As the new millennium loomed, Adams felt like a man out of time, falling short of platinum sales for the first time since the early-80s and only kept in rotation by *When You're Gone's* goonish (but admittedly catchy) music video opposite Sporty Spice. *On A Day Like Today* would no doubt have benefited from a spoonful of Mutt Lange's songwriting sugar, but there's more quality here than the album's reduced-rack status would suggest: the effervescent hooks of *Before The Night Is Over* are vintage Adams, and the original version of *Cloud Number Nine* remains one of his loveliest ballads.



Get Up

2015, POLYDOR

Having ducked out of the studio for seven years after 2008's so-so *11* (we're not counting covers album *Tracks Of My Years*), Adams returned with Jeff Lynne on production, and a batch of better songs. In the likely event that you're streaming *Get Up*, start with the singles: *Brand New Day*, *Don't Even Try* and *Do What Ya Gotta Do* all have a winsome 12-string Byrdsian jangle, while brittle-pickin' opener *You Belong To Me* sets out its stall as a great lost Sun Records session. Buoyed by a New Year's Eve TV performance at Big Ben, this, Adams's thirteenth album reached No.2 in the UK – clearly, he wasn't done yet.

Avoid



Room Service

2004, POLYDOR

With an on-tour Adams setting up a rig in his hotel room each night, *Room Service* was perhaps shooting for the same diesel-fumed momentum as Jackson Browne's road-recorded *Running On Empty*, but Adams's travelogue suffers by comparison, its neat concept hobbled by numbing songs and blunt execution. Such is his quality control and respect for his fan-base, he doesn't release 'bad' albums as such. But this one is a sleepwalking collection with a 'Do Not Disturb' sign hanging from its door knob, songs like *Flying* and *Nowhere Fast* trading their wares then fading from the rear-view mirror without a trace.

Essential Playlist

Cuts Like A Knife

Cuts Like A Knife

Straight From The Heart

Cuts Like A Knife

Run To You

Reckless

Heaven

Reckless

Summer Of '69

Reckless

It's Only Love

Reckless

Lonely Nights

You Want It You Got It

Can't Stop This Thing We Started

Waking Up The Neighbours

There Will Never Be Another Tonight

Waking Up The Neighbours

(Everything I Do) I Do It For You

Waking Up The Neighbours

The Only Thing That Looks Good On Me Is You

18 Til I Die

So Happy It Hurts

So Happy It Hurts

Kick Ass

So Happy It Hurts

Rebel

Into The Fire

Before The Night Is Over

On A Day Like Today

Cloud Number Nine

On A Day Like Today

You Belong To Me

Get Up

COSTELLO & NIEVE

IN CONCERT



02 & 03 SEP • LEEDS
CITY VARIETIES MUSIC HALL

05 SEP • GLASGOW LOW TICKETS
THEATRE ROYAL

07 SEP • GATESHEAD LOW TICKETS
THE GLASSHOUSE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

08 SEP • MANCHESTER
OPERA HOUSE

11 SEP • LIVERPOOL
OLYMPIA

12 SEP • BUXTON
OPERA HOUSE

14 SEP • CARDIFF
NEW THEATRE

15 SEP • OXFORD
NEW THEATRE

17 SEP • BRISTOL LOW TICKETS
BRISTOL BEACON

18 SEP • POOLE
LIGHTHOUSE

21 SEP • LONDON
PALLADIUM

22 SEP • LONDON
PALLADIUM

24 SEP • IPSWICH
REGENT THEATRE

25 SEP • WOLVERHAMPTON
THE HALLS

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03 MANCHESTER 02 RITZ	08 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE	17 LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE THEATRE
04 GLASGOW 02 ACADEMY	10 PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL	12 BUXTON OPERA HOUSE
06 BRIGHTON DOOME	12 BUXTON OPERA HOUSE	14 BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL
07 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL	15 BATH FORUM	18 LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE THEATRE

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WED 16	BIRMINGHAM UTILITA ARENA
THU 17	MANCHESTER AO ARENA
FRI 18	LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
SUN 20	LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
MON 21	LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO

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DEVIL GATE DRIVE ★ SHE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU

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LONDON PALLADIUM

FRIDAY 15
YORK BARBICAN

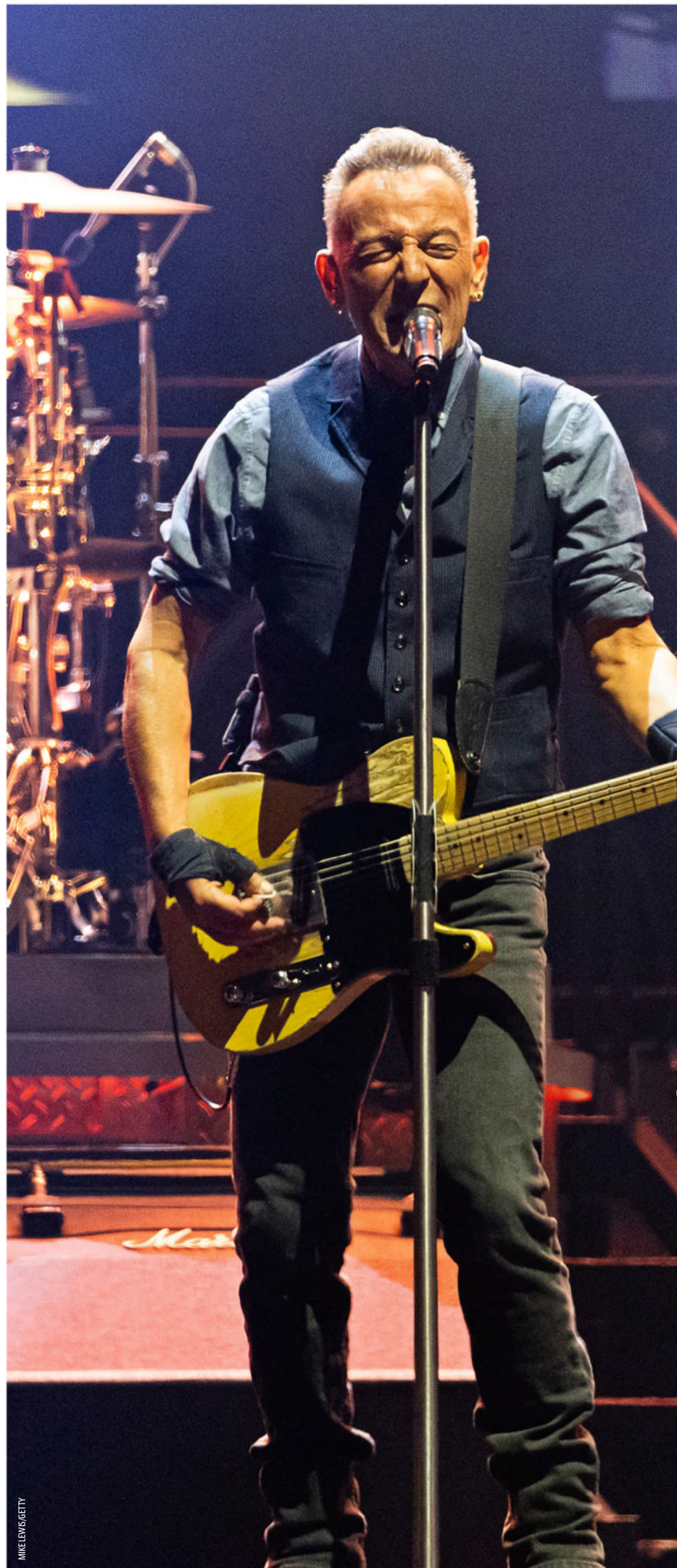
SUNDAY 17
CARDIFF NEW THEATRE

MONDAY 18
LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL

WEDNESDAY 20
LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL



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LIVE!

THE HIGH-VOLTAGE WHAT'S ON GUIDE

EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM (REVIEWS) AND DAVE LING (TOURS)

P **102**

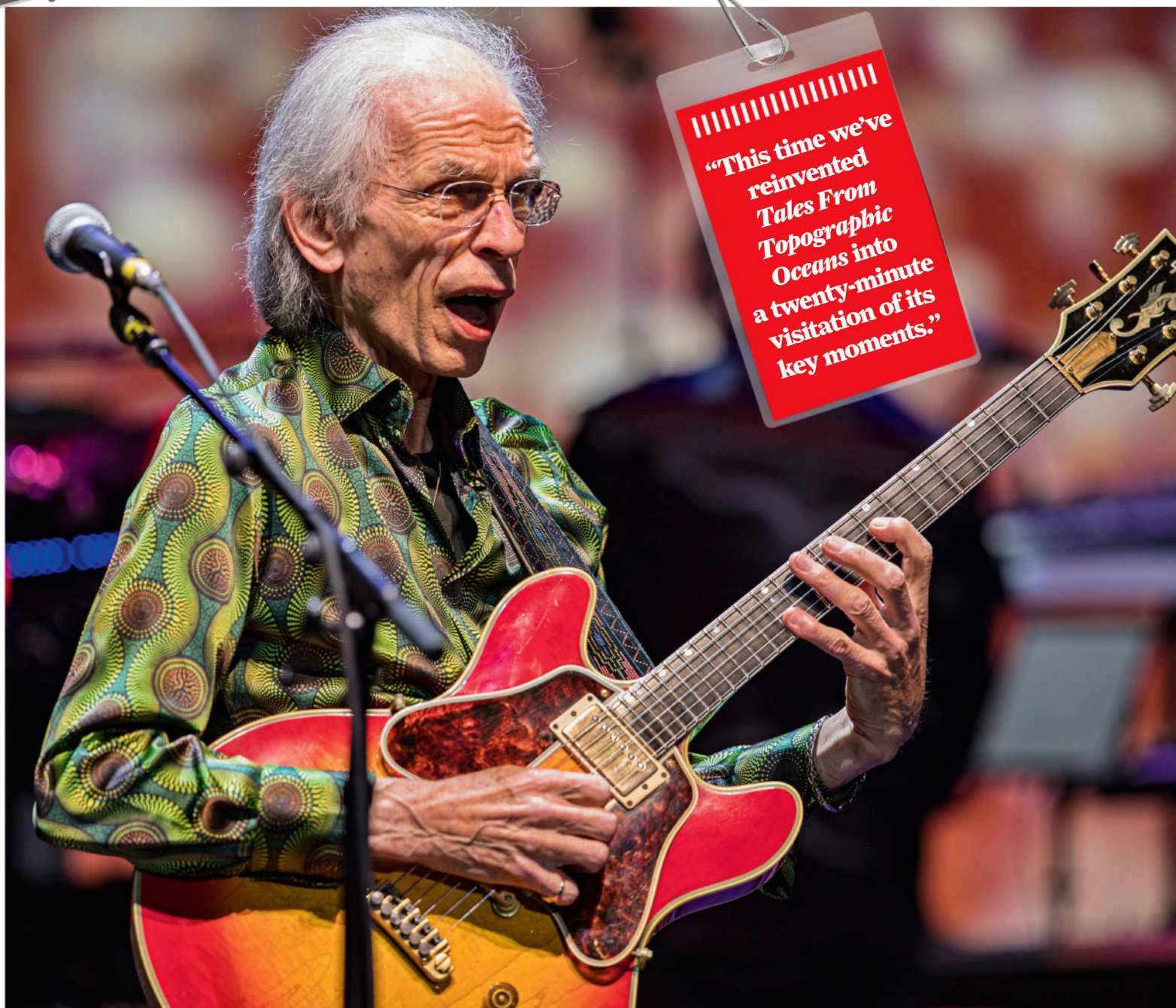
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P **96** INTERVIEWS

P **99** TOUR DATES

P **102** LIVE REVIEWS



“This time we’ve reinvented *Tales From Topographic Oceans* into a twenty-minute visitation of its key moments.”

Yes

One of the cornerstone bands of British prog wrap up their latest British tour in June.

Steve Howe, guitarist and Yes’s de facto leader of the moment, previews a nine-date British tour from the enduring progressive rockers. Billed as *The Classic Tales Of Yes*, it will see the group performing music from last year’s album *Mirror To The Sky* and, of course, a whole host of Yes’s catalogue standards, including some “rarely played” selections.

Before his death, Alan White, Yes’s drummer for more than fifty years, gave his blessing to his successor Jay Schellen. How do you think Jay is bedding into the line-up?

Those are difficult shoes to fill, but Jay has been in the background with us for a while. On tour, Alan would come out and do the encores, or maybe

even the last song, as his capability minimised. Jay was there in the groove and ready to step up. Every musician has goals to reach. Jay has set a few of those for himself and also as part of Yes, but he’s working in [to the role] really well.

Were you satisfied with the general response to the most recent Yes album, *Mirror To The Sky*, which was released in May 2023?

Yeah. The band is enjoying moving forwards again. There have been some big gaps between albums, and there were reasons for that, but doing *Mirror To The Sky* so soon after *The Quest* [2021] gave us a real platform for development. I was very happy with songs like *Luminosity* and *Circles Of Time*.

In that same spirit of industry, how is work proceeding on what would be Yes’s twenty-fourth studio album?

There are elements [of material] going forward, but we’re in no hurry. Rushing things doesn’t work for any of the team. We’ll go there when we’re ready.

One of the most fascinating things about Yes is the band’s regular changes of leadership. As producer and driving force, you are very much the man in the driving seat at present. How does that responsibility sit with you?

I had no goal of being the leader of Yes. I always joke that when I joined the band there were already two people arguing about it. But yeah,

at the moment the band does listen to me, though I'm head of a democracy. It's a two-way street, and it works.

All the best organisations have succession plans. Do you have somebody in mind who might take control of Yes when your turn ends? I don't quite follow your question?

Who has it in their locker to become the next leader? As the band's second longest-serving member, could Geoffrey Downes step up?
That's far too presumptuous. As I've said, it's not a leadership game. It's about the person that has ideas and that can project them towards the band, that's the spirit we're talking about. Right now it's me, but I can't predict who the next guy will be.

Do you envisage a time when you will no longer be able to continue as a member of Yes, or even have the desire to do so?

I haven't got a crystal ball, I don't even know how I will feel tomorrow, but at the moment I'm happy going along with it. The band has some style, and it moves at a comfortable pace. But of course I still have external goals, particularly about playing solo guitar, which is why I released my album *Motif Volume 2* last year.

Are you proud of the fact that, along with bands like the Stones, Yes are rewriting the rules of rock music? At the outset, a group could hope to last maybe five or ten years at the most.

Absolutely. In the sixties I remember Paul McCartney saying that they [The Beatles] would be retiring soon. And I never thought that I would be in Yes again after I left [in 1981] and Asia came along. It does make me proud that we are still one of those bands that still goes out there and rocks. The Stones still do it, and so do we. I'm not into praising myself, but when I joined Yes [in 1970] there must have been some ingredient that enabled me to harmonise with Jon [Anderson] and Chris [Squire].

Here's a Pseuds' Corner question: is it important that Yes continues to exist in one form or another?

Yeah, I think that it is. When I'm not interested or unavailable, or for whatever reason, I believe that Yes should carry on. That's down to the skill of the people that remain.

Like Kiss, when no original members remain could Yes continue as a hologram band?

People seem to really like the ABBA avatar show, and if that's true I can't see what's wrong with it. I believe that if you don't keep up with technology then you fall behind.

Who picks the set-list for Yes tours?

I don't like to tell you how. I write a basic list, but it's democratic. Everybody has to agree on the songs and the running order. This time there are some interesting ideas. We've reinvented *Tales From Topographic Oceans* [1973's controversial, conceptual double album] into a twenty-minute visitation of its key moments. That's my pride and joy at the moment. **DL**

The last date of the tour is at London's Royal Albert Hall on June 4.



Richie Kotzen

The guitarist/vocalist crosses the pond to play three shows.

As the much-travelled American guitarist, vocalist and songwriter prepares to play three British and Irish solo shows, he tells *CR* about his long career, which includes spells with Poison, Mr. Big and The Winery Dogs, plus a recent collaboration with Iron Maiden guitarist Adrian Smith.

Wasn't it seeing a poster of Kiss's Gene Simmons breathing fire that made you want to become a musician when you were seven?

That's completely true, it's all Gene's fault. I had been taking piano lessons, but I convinced my parents to buy me a guitar from a yard sale.

Decades later, while playing on Gene's solo record *Asshole*, did you tell him about that?

We recorded that album at my studio, so there was a lot of down time, and I would definitely have told him the story. I don't recall what he said, but probably something along the lines of: "Join the club." He must hear it all the time.

While Gene set you out on this journey, the patronage of Mike Varney at *Guitar Player* magazine must have been a vital second stage.

You're right. I was seventeen. After doing a write-up on me, Varney signed me to Shrapnel Records. I quickly realised that my heart wasn't in instrumental music, so my second album [*Fever Dream*, 1990] had vocals. Mike convinced me that I could sing, which really led me on the path I've followed.

With hindsight, how do you now look back at your two-year spell in Poison? The resulting album, *Native Tongue*, is sorely underrated.

Being in Poison was a great thing for me, despite the fact that as a young man I don't think I saw myself being in a band like that for

too long. Now I can look back and realise it was an important time for me, and I agree that we made a great album. Bret [Michaels, vocalist] really encouraged me to sing, and that was cool for me.

Then you replaced Paul Gilbert in Mr. Big.

That was quite different to Poison. I was in a band with [celebrated jazz bassist] Stanley Clarke, but one day Billy [Sheehan, bassist] and Pat [Torpey, drums] came to my house and there was almost a Mafiosi-style meeting about me joining them. At the time, they were only active in Japan, with minimal touring planned. Looking back now, I see that it was a part of my education.

You're also a member of The Winery Dogs, along with Billy Sheehan and Mike Portnoy. Do you prefer a trio, or a quartet?

I prefer to be in a power trio. It's unusual for me to be in a four-piece. That's just the way I prefer things. With very rare exceptions, I have done from the very beginning.

Smith/Kotzen, your project with Adrian Smith, made an album and an EP and toured in 2021. Is there more to come from them?

Oh, for sure. Adrian and I have written more songs that would be very well suited for a second Smith/Kotzen album at some point in the future. I can't tell you when that might be. This year is set aside for myself.

Does that include a new solo album?

A brand-new song is being mixed right now in time to be a single for the tour, and that will lead into an album in the fall. **DL**

The first of Kotzen's three British/Irish dates is in Belfast on July 10.



“The last show is in Bristol. We wanted to wrap things up in the UK, the first place our career as a band really took off.”

Deap Vally

The American duo play their final shows, in the UK, before calling time on being a band.

After a 13-year run during which the California-based duo released four albums, an EP and several singles, it's time to say goodbye to guitarist and vocalist Lindsey Troy and drummer Julie Edwards, a duo once described as having the scuzz of The White Stripes and Led Zeppelin's power.

Why is this Deap Vally's final UK tour?

Lindsey Troy: We each have two small children, and it's increasingly difficult to maintain trajectory as an indie band. So Julie is going back to school to become a forensic psychologist. It seemed weird to continue the band without her, so we are doing one last big farewell tour to really make it count.

Julie Edwards: As Kenny Rogers so wisely said, ya gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em.

Is it a complete end for Deap Vally?

JE: As a touring band making records, this is it.

LT: We will remain open to collaboration in regard to writing and recording if an opportunity arises. For instance, sometimes we get requests to write songs for movies and videogames.

How do you expect to feel after the cheers for the last song fade?

JE: The reality of it will hit us pretty hard.

LT: There will probably be some tears. The last show is in Bristol. We wanted to wrap things up in the UK, the first place our career as a band really took off.

And what happens next?

LT: We'll both be excited to return home to our children and give them the attention they deserve. I'm writing my solo record right now.

JE: Very unexpectedly my old friend Solon Bixler and I started a new project called Dosiopath, and we're actually opening on some of the Deap Vally farewell dates. Then I must complete my prerequisites to enter grad school, and also find a job. Anyone hiring?

In a 'closing of the circle'-type move, Deap Vally's final release is an expanded re-recording of the 2013 debut *Sistrionix*.

LT: I love that we reclaimed our intellectual property and made available a whole collection of songs on vinyl that had been out of print for years. Taking ownership of our masters as a final release is symbolic and powerful.

What do you remember as some of the best moments from your journey?

LT: One: being on *Later... With Jools Holland*. Two: staying at Wayne Coyne's house and getting to know him and learn from him for a week while we

made a record with the Flaming Lips called *Deap Lips*. Three: having Nick Zinner of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, who is one of my musical heroes, produce our second record, *Femejism*, and getting to work and learn from him during that entire process. And finally, four: this tour.

And low points?

JE: Losing my mind during the pandemic, and quitting Deap Vally for a year during the album cycle of *Marriage* [2021].

LT: Having to fight tooth and nail on our first record cycle with Island Records to maintain our creative vision.

A little over a decade after you first met, are you still good friends?

LT: Julie and I are very close, like sisters. There's a special creative bond. We've had ups and downs but there's a lot of love

What will be Deap Vally's epitaph?

LT: Women of intention [a reference to the band's song *Woman Of Intention*].

Also maybe that Julie and Lindsey should have studied harder and learned to spell?

LT: You're probably right [laughs]. **DL**

The first date of the tour is on June 3.

Tour Dates

AC/DC, THE PRETTY RECKLESS

London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 3, 7
Dublin	Croke Park	Aug 17

THE ALMIGHTY

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Nov 29
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Nov 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 29
Barrowland	Ballroom	Nov 30 [2025]

THE ANSWER

London	Camden Dingwalls	Jun 20
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ANTHRAX, KREATOR, TESTAMENT

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 21
Wolverhampton	Civic	Nov 22
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 23
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 25
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 27

APOCALYPTICA

Manchester	Albert Hall	Sep 29
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 30
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Oct 1
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Oct 5

ARMORED SAINT

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 13
Manchester	Rebellion	Aug 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Aug 16
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Aug 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Aug 18

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Wigan	Robin Park	Jul 20
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BAD TOUCH

Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 23
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BALAAM AND THE ANGEL

Leamington Spa	The Assembly	Nov 8
Reading	Face Bar	Nov 9
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 14
Glasgow	Room 2	Nov 21
Sheffield	Network	Nov 22
Hull	New Adelphi	Nov 23
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	Nov 28
Bedford	Esquires	Nov 29

BEAUX GRIS GRIS AND THE APOCALYPSE

Leamington Spa	Temperance	Jul 19
Cambridge	Junction 2	Jul 24
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jul 25
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jul 26

BLAZE BAYLEY

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Sep 18
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 19
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 20
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 21
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 22

BIG BIG TRAIN

Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Sep 17
Newport	Riverfront	Sep 18
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Sep 19
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Sep 21
Newark	Palace Theatre	Sep 22
Wavendon	The Stables	Sep 24
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Sep 25
London	Cadogan Hall	Oct 5

BLACKBERRY SMOKE, THE STEEL WOODS

Glasgow	Academy	Sep 9
Edinburgh	Academy	Sep 10
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 12
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 14

BODYCOUNT

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 1
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 2

JOE BONAMASSA

Basingstoke	The Anvil	Jun 15
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BRAVE RIVAL

Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Jun 14
Fareham	Ashcroft Arts Theatre	Jun 15
Worthing	Factory	Jun 16
Cranbrook	Queens Hall	Jun 22
Chippenham	The Pewson	Jun 29

Petersfield	Festival Hall	Aug 31
Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 4

CALIGULA'S HORSE

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 29
Bristol	Thekla	May 30
Manchester	Gorilla	May 31
London	Islington Academy	Jun 1

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS, BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 2
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 3
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 5
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 6
London	O2 Arena	Nov 8, 9
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 12
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 15

CIRITH UNGOL, NIGHT DEMON

London	Islington Academy	Sep 16
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THE COLD STARES

Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 30
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ALICE COOPER, THE MEFFS

Glasgow	OVO Arena	Oct 14
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 16
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 18
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 20, 21

CROWDED HOUSE

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 13
Lincoln	Castle	Jun 15
Oxford	Blenheim Palace	Jun 16
Halifax	Piece Hall	Jun 19
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 20

THE CULT

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 21
Swansea	Arena	Oct 22
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 24
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 25
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 27
York	Barbican	Oct 29
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 1
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 4

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Bedford	Esquires	Jun 21
London	Camden Dingwalls	Jun 22

CURVED AIR

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Aug 15
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Recommended

THE DAMNED

Newcastle	NX	Dec 4
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 5
Manchester	Academy	Dec 6
Leeds	Academy	Dec 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 9
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 10
Bristol	Beacon	Dec 12
Southampton	Guildhall	Dec 13
Eastbourne	Winter Garden	Dec 14
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 16
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 18

THE DEAD DAISIES, THE TREATMENT, THE BITES

Brighton	Chalk	Sep 6
Torquay	The Foundry	Sep 7
Southampton	1865	Sep 8
Holmfrith	Picturedrome	Sep 10
Glasgow	SWG3	Sep 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 14
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Sep 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 17
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Sep 18
Bristol	Academy	Sep 20
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 21

DEAP VALLY

Brighton	Concorde 2	Jun 3
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Jun 5
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Jun 6
London	Dalston Earth	Jun 8
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 9

THE CULT



Fire Woman, She Sells Sanctuary, Spirit Walker... You want rock?
Ian Astbury and Billy Duffy and co. have got plenty. Dive in.

See below for dates. Currently October 21 to November 4.

DEEP PURPLE, REEF

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 4
London	O2 Arena	Nov 6
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 9
Glasgow	OVO Hydro	Nov 10

DEMON

Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 18
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 19

PAUL DI'ANNO, GYPSY'S KISS

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Aug 21
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 22
Newark	Stonedead Festival Party	Aug 23
Crumlin	The Patriot	Aug 25
Swindon	The Vic	Aug 26

DOGSTAR

Manchester	New Century Hall	Jun 18
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 19

DREAM THEATER

London	O2 Arena	Oct 20
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EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 11
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FISH

Haddington	Corn Exchange	Feb 18, 19
Manchester	Albert Hall	Feb 21
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Feb 22
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Feb 23
London	Palladium	Feb 25
Bristol	Beacon	Feb 26
Aylesbury	Waterside Arts Centre	Feb 28
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 2
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Mar 5
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 6
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Mar 7
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 9, 10

FM

Southampton	1865	May 24
London	Camden Dingwalls	May 25
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 30
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 31
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Jun 1
Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 17
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 9

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 13, 15
Glasgow	Hampden Park	Jun 17
London	Stadium	Jun 20, 21
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 25
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 27

GARBAGE

Glasgow	TRNSMT Festival	Jul 12
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Jul 14
Bridlington	Spa	Jul 15
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jul 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 19
London	Wembley Arena	Jul 20

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

Glasgow	Academy	Jun 18
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 21

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 22
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jun 23
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 25, 26
Dublin	3 Olympia	Jun 29
Nottingham	Rock City	Jul 10
Cheltenham	2000 Trees Festival	Jul 11

GONG

Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Aug 16
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GRETA VAN FLEET

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jul 14
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GREEN DAY

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 21
Isle of Wight	Festival	Jun 23
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 25
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 27
London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 29

GUN

London	King's Cross Scala	Dec 4
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 5
Manchester	Academy 2	Dec 6
Bristol	SWX	Dec 7
Southampton	The Brook	Dec 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 10
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Dec 11
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 12
Galashiels	Mac Arts	Dec 13
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Dec 14

AN EVENING WITH HAKEN

Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 20
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 21

PJ HARVEY, BIG THIEF, TIRZAH, SHIDA SHAHABI

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 18
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HAWKWIND

Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 14
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	Jun 15
Bath	Forum	Aug 16
Faversham	A New Fay Festival	Aug 17

HEART, SQUEEZE

London	O2 Arena	Jul 1
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 3
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Jul 6
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Jul 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 9

HEKZ

Bedford	Esquires	Jun 28
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Sep 20
Southampton	1865	Oct 22

HIGH ON FIRE

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jun 14
Manchester	Rebellion	Jun 15
Glasgow	Slay	Jun 16
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jun 17
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 18

HILLBILLY VEGAS, THE HOWLING TIDES

Hull	Adelphi	Jul 17
Newcastle	Trillians	Jul 18
Crumlin	The Patriot	Jul 19



LIVE!

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jul 21
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jul 24
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 25
Sittingbourne	The Appleyard	Jul 27

JADIS		
Southampton	1865	Jun 22

JANE'S ADDICTION		
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 27, 28
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 31
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

TOBY JEPSON, WORDS & ACOUSTIC		
Ballymena	Diamond Rock Club	Jun 1
Nottingham	Rock City Beta	Jun 6
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Jun 8
London	Islington Academy	Jun 9
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Jun 16
Glasgow	Garage Attic	Jun 18
Edinburgh	Mash House	Jun 19
Huddersfield	Parish	Jun 21
Hull	The Welly	Jun 22
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 24, 25

LAURENCE JONES		
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	May 29

JOURNEY, CHEAP TRICK		
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Oct 30
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 31
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 2
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 4
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 8
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 9
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Nov 11
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 13
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Nov 16
London	O2 Arena	Nov 17

THE KARMA EFFECT		
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 12

KARNIVOOL		
Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 15
Milton Keynes	Crauford Arms	Jun 16
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 17

KERBDOG		
Kilkenny	Set Theatre	Sep 20
Cork	Cyprus Avenue	Sep 21
Belfast	Limelight 2	Sep 28
Dublin	Academy	Oct 12

KERRY KING		
Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 16
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 18

JIM KIRKPATRICK BAND		
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 10
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Oct 11
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Oct 12
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 13

KK'S PRIEST		
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 18
Belfast	Limelight	Aug 20
Dublin	Academy	Aug 21
Newcastle	NX	Aug 23
Newark	Stonedead Festival	Aug 24

KORN, DENZEL CURRY, SPIRITBOX		
London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 11

RICHIE KOTZEN		
Belfast	Limelight	Jul 10
Dublin	Opium Live	Jul 11
London	Islington Academy	Jul 13

L7		
Belfast	Limelight	
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 16

THE LONG RYDERS		
Glasgow	Oran More	Oct 10
Birkenhead	Futureyard	Oct 11
Leeds	Old Woollen	Oct 12
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Oct 13
Nottingham	Metronome	Oct 14
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 15
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 16
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 17
Hastings	The Piper	Oct 18

LOVE FEATURING JOHNNY ECHOLS		
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Jul 10
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Jul 11
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Jul 12
Liverpool	Academy 2	Jul 13
Guildford	Boilerroom	Jul 15
Southampton	1865	Jul 17
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jul 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 20
Newcastle	Gosforth Civic	Jul 24

Edinburgh	The Caves	Jul 25
Glasgow	St Luke's	Jul 26
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jul 29
Bristol	The Fleece	Aug 1
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Aug 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 3

Recommended		
MAMMOTH WVH		
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 8
London	Islington Academy	Jul 9

MANIC STREET PREACHERS, SUEDE		
Llangollen	International Musical Eisteddfod	Jun 28
Dublin	Trinity College	Jul 2
Cardiff	Castle	Jul 5
Edinburgh	Castle	Jul 10
Manchester	Castlefield Bowl	Jul 12
Leeds	Millennium Square	Jul 13
London	Alexandra Palace Park	Jul 18

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS		
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Jun 11
York	Barbican	Jun 11
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 13
Oxford	New Theatre	Jun 15
Bristol	Beacon	Jun 17
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 18
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 19
Glasgow	SEC	Jun 21
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Jun 22
Cardiff	Millennium Centre	Jun 24
Poole	Lighthouse	Jun 25
Brighton	Dome	Jun 26
Ipswich	Regent	Jun 28
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 29

ANDY McCOY BAND, CONTINENTAL LOVERS		
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 11
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 12
Bradford	Nighttrain	Sep 13
Newcastle	Think Tank	Sep 14
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 16
Brighton	The Arch	Sep 18
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 19
Swansea	The Bunkhouse	Sep 20

CHANTEL MCGREGOR		
Rotherham	Chantry Brewery	Jun 8
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Jun 13
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	Jun 16
Bradford	Tapestry	Jun 21
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 5
Linton	Blues Festival Jun	Jul 6
Worthing	The Factory Live	Jul 18
Ripley	Town Hall	Jul 20
Penzance	Acord	Sep 7
Frome	Tree House	Sep 8
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	Sep 18
Silsden	Town Hall	Sep 28
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Dec 4

MARCO MENDOZA TRIO		
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 30
Mayo	Jesters	May 31
Dublin	Thomas House	Jun 1
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Jun 2
Newcastle	Trillians	Jun 3
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 4
Sheffield	Corporation	Jun 5
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jun 6
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Jun 7
Bradford	Nighttrain	Jun 8
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jun 9

DUFF MCKAGAN		
Dublin	Academy	Oct 30
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 2
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 3
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 5

MR. BIG		
Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 21
Leeds	Academy	Jul 22
Liverpool	Academy	Jul 27
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 28

MR BUNGLE		
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 12
Manchester	The Ritz	Jun 13
Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 14

MOON SAFARI		
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 6

IAN MOSS		
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah	Hut Jul 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jul 12



FOO FIGHTERS

With a tote bag full of top tunes, and live shows offering entertainment as well as musical thrills, they're a must-see.

See previous page for dates. Currently June 13 to June 27.

STEVIE NICKS		
Glasgow	Hydro	Jul 6
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 9
London	Hyde Park BST	Jul 12

GARY NUMAN		
Manchester	The Ritz	May 24, Jun 5, 6
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 25, Jun 8
Bristol	Academy	May 27
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 28
Bournemouth	Academy	May 30
Birmingham	Institute	May 31
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 1
Leeds	Academy	Jun 3
Liverpool	Academy	Jun 4

ORANGE GOBLIN		
Dublin	Opium	Oct 4
Belfast	Limelight 2	Oct 5
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Oct 6
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 8
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 9
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 10
Southampton	1865	Oct 11
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 12

CASSIDY PARIS		
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Jul 12
Sheffield	Corporation	Jul 13
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 18
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Jul 19
Preston	The Ferret	Jul 20
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jul 23
Huddersfield	Parish	Jul 24
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jul 25
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 28
Leicester	The Musician	Aug 1
London	Stratford Cart And Horses	Aug 2
Southampton	Suburbia	Aug 3
Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 6
Wimbledon	The Cavern	Aug 7
Camberley	Login Lounge	Aug 8
Gravesend	Red Lion	Aug 9

PEARL JAM		
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 25
London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 29

THE PRETENDERS		
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 11
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 12
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 13
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 16
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Oct 17
Hull	Connexin Live	Oct 19
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 20
London	Palladium	Oct 22-24
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Oct 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 27
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 28

TROY REDFERN		
Frome	The Treehouse	Jun 17
Manchester	Retro	Jun 18
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Jun 19
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Jun 21
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Jun 22
Guildford	Boilerroom	Jun 23

Cambridge	Junction	Jun 24
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Jun 25
London	New Cross Inn	Jun 26
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Jun 27

RIVAL SONS		
Oxford	Academy	Jun 9
Northampton	Roadmender	Jun 10

ROYAL BLOOD		
Bournemouth	Academy	Jun 17
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 18, 19

SAD CAFÉ		
Barnoldswick	Arts Centre	Jun 15
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Jun 16
Buxton	Opera House	Jul 14

SCORPIONS, EXTREME		
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 8

CONNOR SELBY		
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Jun 13
Aldershot	West End Centre	Jun 14
Fareham	Ashcroft Arts Centre	Jun 22

THE SMASHING PUMPKINS, WEEZER		
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jun 7
London	O2 Arena	Jun 8
Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 10
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 12
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 13
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 14

PATTI SMITH QUARTET		
London	Somerset House	Jun 21
Brighton	Dome	Jun 25

SPREAD EAGLE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS		
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 24
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 25
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 26
Derby	Queen Vic	Sep 28
Birmingham	Subside	Sep 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 2
Bristol	Gryphon	Oct 3
London	Camden Assembly	Oct 4
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 5

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND		
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25, 27

STATUS QUO		
Belfast	Botanic Gardens	May 28
Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jun 2
Swansea	Arena	Jun 4
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jun 5
Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 13
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 15
Taunton	Vivary Park	Aug 23

GEOFF TATE, KIM JENNETT		
Limerick	Dolans	Sep 27
Londonderry	Nerve Centre	Sep 28
Galway	Róisín Dubh	Sep 29
London	Islington Academy	Oct 3
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 4
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 5

Birmingham	Institute	Oct 6
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 9
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Oct 12
Dundee	Beat Generator	Oct 15
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 18

TEN

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 8
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 30
Manchester	Academy	Jul 13
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Jul 20
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Jul 27
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Aug 17
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Sep 7

TERRORVISION

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 20
Norwich	Epic Studios	Sep 21
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 22
Leeds	Project House	Sep 24
Bristol	The Fleece	Sep 25
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 26
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Sep 27
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Sep 28
Glasgow	Slay	Sep 29

THESE WICKED RIVERS, SHE BURNS RED

Cardiff	Club Ifor Bach	May 24
Bournemouth	Bear Cave	May 25
Lincolnshire	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 26
Leicester	Academy	May 31
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 1
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jun 2

Recommended

RICHARD THOMPSON

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 25
Bristol	Beacon	May 26
York	Barbican	May 27
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 29
Gateshead	Glasshouse	May 30
Manchester	Aviva Studios	May 31
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Jun 1
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 3
Cardiff	New Theatre	Jun 4
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Jun 5
Brighton	Dome	Jun 6
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 8

TIGERTAILZ

Buckey	Tivoli	Jul 19
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 20
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 10

TOOL

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 30
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 1
London	O2 Arena	Jun 3

ROBIN TROWER, CONNOLLY HAYES

Southampton	The Brook	May 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 28
Gateshead	Glasshouse	May 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 31

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Sep 4
Southampton	1865	Sep 5
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Sep 6
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Sep 7
Deal	Astor Theatre	Sep 12
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Sep 13
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Sep 14
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Sep 19
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Sep 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 21
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Sep 26
London	Camden The Forge	Oct 3
Chelmsford	Social Club	Oct 4

TYKETTO, LITTLE CAESAR

London	Islington Academy	Sep 12
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 14
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Sep 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 17
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 19
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 21
Southampton	1865	Sep 22

WARRIOR SOUL

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 10
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 11
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Jul 12
Nottingham	Bootleggers	Jul 13

Coalville	The Victoria	Jul 14
Newcastle	Trillians	Jul 17
Glasgow	[Venue TBC]	Jul 18

PAUL WELLER

Cheltenham	Centaur	Oct 17
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 18
Brighton	Centre	Oct 19
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 21
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Oct 22
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 24, 25
Dundee	Caird Hall	Oct 27
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 28, 29
Hull	Connexin Live	Oct 31
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 1
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Nov 2
Liverpool	Olympia	Nov 4
Bradford	St George's Hall	Nov 5
Oxford	New Theatre	Nov 7
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 8

DARREN WHARTON'S RENEGADE

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 6
London	Islington Academy	Jun 7
Birmingham	Institute	Jun 8
Bury	The Met	Jun 9

HANNAH WICKLUND

Chester	Live Rooms	May 24
Sheffield	Corporation	May 25
Cardiff	Globe	May 26
Dublin	Grand Social	May 28
Belfast	Ulster Sports Club	May 29
Glasgow	G2	May 31
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Jun 1
Leeds	Headrow House	Jun 2
Bristol	Strange Brew	Jun 4

THE WILDHEARTS, FLORENCE BLACK, ASOMVEL

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 6
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WINGER, JOE HOEKSTRA & BRANDON GIBBS

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jun 7
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WISHBONE ASH

Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 21
Lytham	Lowther Pavilion	Sep 23
Southport	Atkinson Theatre	Sep 24
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Sep 26
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Sep 27
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Sep 28
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Sep 29
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Oct 1
Stockton-on-Tees	ARC	Oct 2
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 3
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 4
Bury	The Met	Oct 5
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 7
Hunstanton	Princess Theatre	Oct 8
Lincoln	The Drill	Oct 9
Walsall	Arena And Arts Centre	Oct 10
Rugby	Benn Hall	Oct 11
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Oct 12
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 14
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 15
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 16
Wimbome	Tivoli	Oct 17
Devizes	Corn Exchange	Oct 18
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 19
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 21
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 22
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 23
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 24

YES

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 24
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 26
York	Barbican	May 28
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	May 29
Bristol	Beacon	May 31
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 1
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 4

ZZ TOP, RIVAL SONS, THOSE DAMN CROWS

London	Wembley Arena	Jul 11
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Festivals

2000 TREES

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM, MORE

Cheltenham	Upote Farm	Jul 10-13
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ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL

MOWGAI, ILSAHN, MESHUGGAH, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 14-17
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BEARDED THEORY

JANE'S ADDICTION, DINOSAUR JR, NEW MODEL ARMY, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Hall	May 23-26
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PRETENDERS



Soak up a gilt-edged catalogue that includes a lot more than just the hits, and Chrissie Hynde's ever-cool stage presence.

See previous page for dates. Currently October 11 to October 28.

BEAUTIFUL DAYS RICHARD ASHCROFT, TOYAH & ROBERT FRIPP, LEVELLERS, MORE

Devon	Escot Park	Aug 16-18
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BLACK DEER SHERYL CROW, SEASICK STEVE, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 14-16
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BLOODSTOCK OPETH, AMON AMARTH, CLUTCH, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 8-11
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CALL OF THE WILD TYKETTO, BAD TOUCH, SOUTH OF SALEM, MORE

Lincolnshire	Showground	May 24-26
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CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL

ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE, TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS, FANTASTIC NEGRO, MORE

Cambridge	Cherry Hinton Hall	Jul 25-28
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CROPPREY RICK WAKEMAN, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOCUS, MORE

Oxfordshire	Croppedy	Aug 8-10
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DOWNLOAD QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, AVENGED SEVENFOLD, PANTERA, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 14-16
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FIREVOLT VANDENBERG, GUN, STONE BROKEN, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 9-11
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HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE HOUSE OF LORDS, SANTA CRUZ, SPACE AGE PLAYBOYS, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 6-8
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ISLE OF WIGHT THE DARKNESS, GREEN DAY, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Newport	Seaclose Park	Jun 20-23
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LATITUDE DURAN DURAN, KASABIAN, KEANE, MORE

Suffolk	Henham Park	Jul 25-28
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THE LONG ROAD DON McLEAN, THE RED CLAY STRAYS, MORE

Leicestershire	Stanford Hall	Aug 23-25
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LIVE LIVE NAZARETH, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens 28	Feb-Mar 2
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LOVE ROCKS

THE ANSWER, THE TREATMENT, SCARLET REBELS, MORE

Dorset	St Leonards Farm	Jun 20-22
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MAID OF STONE

MR. BIG, WOLF MOTHER, LIVING COLOUR, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 19-21
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MARGATE ROCK FESTIVAL ORANGE GOBLIN, FLORENCE BLACK, WITCH HAZEL, MORE

Margate	Dreamland	Oct 26
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NENE VALLEY ROCK FESTIVAL NEKTAR, CARAVAN, DARREN WHARTON'S RENEGADE, MORE

Lincolnshire	Grimthorpe Castle	Sep 5-8
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A NEW DAY FESTIVAL HAWKWIND, TANGERINE DREAM, GONG, FOCUS, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 16-18
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NORTHERN KIN HAWKWIND, ARTHUR BROWN, MORE

Durham	Thornley Hall Farm	Jun 14-16
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RADAR

TESSERACT, LEPROUS, THE MIDNIGHT, MORE

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jul 26-26
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READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS BLINK 182, LIAM GALLAGHER, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Reading	Little John's Farm	Aug 23-25
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Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 23-25
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REBELLION

THE STRANGLERS, STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, SHAM 69, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 1-4
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S.O.S.

THE HOT DAMN!, FURY, DAN BYRNE, MORE

Oldham	Whittles	Jul 5-7
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SOUNDLE WEEKEND

SOLSTICE, THE EMERALD DAWN, MORE

Peterborough	Key Theatre	Jun 1, 2
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STEELHOUSE

SAXON, THE ALMIGHTY, MR. BIG, SKINDRED, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 26-28
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STONEDEAD

SAXON, KK'S PRIEST, DORO, ECLIPSE, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 24
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TOWER OF FIRE

NITRATE, ATACK, REMEDY, SARACEN, MORE

Manchester	Rebellion	Jun 29
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UK BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL

ARTHUR BROWN, KING KING, CHANTAL MCGREGOR, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Jan 31-Feb 2
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WEYFEST

MARTIN TURNER, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, NEONFLY, MORE

Tilford	Rural Life Museum	Aug 18-24
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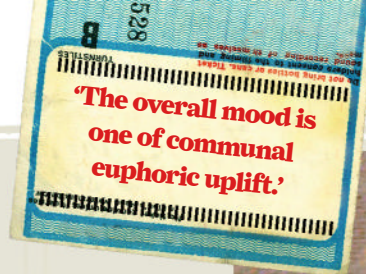
WIDE AWAKE

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD, MORE

London	Brockwell Park	May 25
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LIVE!



Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band

Cardiff Principality Stadium

With a show that even a total Springsteen-phobe would struggle not to enjoy, he demonstrates that even at 74 he's still The Boss.



Springsteen: remains a mesmeric performer.

★ "Cardiff!" Bruce Springsteen screams to 60,000 roaring fans in the Principality Stadium. "The E Street Band is here tonight to bring you the joyous power of rock'n'roll! But we're gonna need some help! We're gonna need a lot of help! We're gonna need a *shitload* of help!"

Let's be honest. The 17-strong multi-guitar, high-decibel, kick-ass rock-gospel monster that is the E Street Band do not really need our help. But if you want to see old-school, PT Barnum showmanship on a big stage, Bruce is still The Boss, working a stadium audience even more shamelessly than Bono, James Hetfield or Taylor Swift.

Kicking off a run of European tour dates delayed from last summer by stomach ulcer problems, Springsteen is on sharp and energised form, barely breaking sweat across three hours.

Lean of frame and gruff of voice, Springsteen can still pass for a decade younger than his 74 years, maybe even two. He soon slips into full testifying preacher mode in Cardiff, trading guitars licks and ragged harmonies with Stevie Van Zandt, who is dressed as ever like a piratical turtle. He high-fives the front row, dispensing hugs and harmonicas to beaming acolytes. But he seems a little more anchored than a decade ago, with less frenzied hurtling around the stage. A strong sense of mortality also runs through tonight's set-list, particularly the latter half, with its tributes to fallen comrades and absent friends.

All the same, the overall mood in the stadium is

|||||
'Springsteen is on sharp and energised form, barely breaking sweat across three hours.'

one of communal euphoric uplift. This is a full-blooded rock'n'soul carnival that even a total Springsteen-phobe would struggle not to enjoy. You might start the evening playing sarcastic Bruce Bingo, with a checklist of familiar tropes – corny hymns to dying heartland towns, factory sweethearts, rivers, bridges, railway tracks, rowdy dive bars – but the sheer widescreen roar of the E Street Band at full tilt will soon stampede over any cynicism. These long-serving baby-boomer icons still make an almighty maximalist racket, a vast, rumbling Pop Art tidal wave that churns up an entire century of Americana:

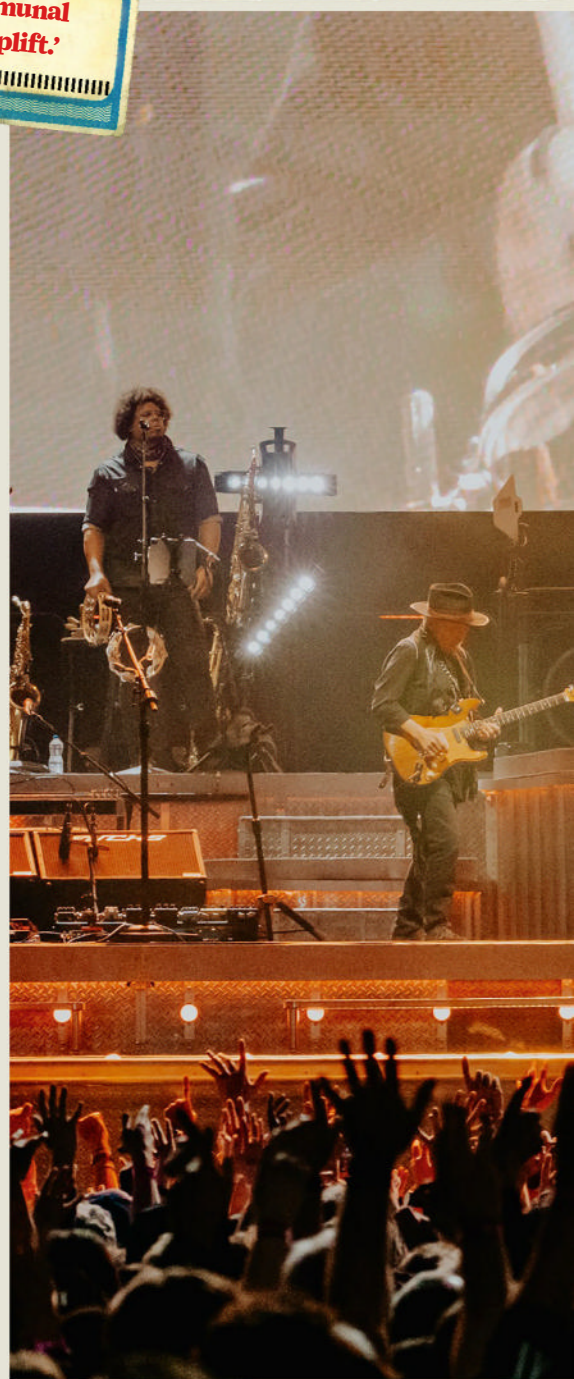
from Elvis to the Ramones, JFK to Barack Obama, John Steinbeck to Jim Steinman, The Supremes to The Sopranos, Phil Spector to Suicide, Bob Dylan to Eddie Vedder. Something for pretty much every taste here.

This tour coincides with Springsteen's latest career-spanning greatest-hits

album, so hard-core fans might take issue with a set-list that overlooks *Streets Of Philadelphia*, *I'm On Fire*, *Girls In Their Summer Clothes*, *Brilliant Disguise* and others. That said, it's not short on classic anthems, from a majestically brooding *The River*, to the swashbuckling saloon-bar swagger of *Hungry Heart* and a deliciously world-weary *Dancing In The Dark*. The Boss is essentially a Prince-level performer nowadays, able to fill marathon three-hour sets by rifling almost randomly through an overstuffed back catalogue of stadium-sized singles, cultish deep cuts, fan favourites and occasional wild cards.

Part of Springsteen's populist genius is how he perpetually teeters on the edge of mullet-haired naffness but never stumbles fully into the abyss. So much of the E Street Band's shtick – raunchy saxophone solos, jaunty waistcoats, old white guys playing hotel-lobby R&B, hammy spiritual sermons – flirt with Jeremy Clarkson-level cringe overload. But Springsteen somehow possesses enough conviction, intelligence and strong musical instinct to transcend cheesy showbiz hucksterism. His everyman authenticity may be a brilliant disguise on some level, but it's a persuasive persona. The lie that tells the truth.

In Cardiff, misty-eyed testosterone anthems like *No Surrender* or *Backstreets* hover just inches away from two-dimensional Bruce-lite copyists like Bon Jovi or The Killers. But those few inches are vital. In the Springsteen Cinematic Universe, crucially there is room for self-doubt, nuance, soulful vulnerability. Even in overdriven machismo mode, as on *Prove It All Night*, he shows us the brittle tenderness behind the





The E Street Band: a 17-strong multi-guitar, high-decibel, kick-ass rock-gospel monster.

pumped-up boy-racer swagger. He also plays a shredding guitar solo here that suggests the bloodline between Scotty Moore and Thurston Moore may be shorter than we think.

After facing criticism for an unusually rigid set-list on the recent US leg of the tour, Springsteen began these European dates by vowing to reshuffle the song selection more. And tonight he throws in some tour debuts in response to fan placards in the audience, a neat trick even if this apparent spontaneity clearly draws on a pre-rehearsed reservoir of songs. One is *Better Days*, which sounds radiant and monumental. Another is *If I Was The Priest*, a recently rediscovered archive track that reimagines the Wild West as a Biblical wasteland, all blasting along with a swashbuckling Dylan-goes-electric swagger. "Here's a song I wrote fifty years ago," he tells Cardiff. "It was what I was busy doing while you weren't here."

If this show has flaws and lulls, they are fairly minor. A few too many middling numbers in the first

hour maybe. Occasional plodding, sprawling arrangements of songs that might once have blasted along, notably *Thunder Road*. But Springsteen is a master of stamina, pacing his energy levels for the rollicking encore section, which takes place under the full glare of the house lights.

Kicking off this final act, the walloping back beat and imperial fanfare of *Born In The U.S.A.* come as a pleasant surprise, given that Springsteen ignored his biggest signature anthem entirely on his recent US dates, possibly still wary of it being misinterpreted as a patriotic celebration instead of a bitterly ironic social-protest song. Next up is the obligatory *Born To Run*, a delirious glam-rock epic disguised in oily overalls, and still the most gloriously preposterous adrenaline rush in a songbook already bursting with supercharged melodrama. Freddie Mercury could easily have covered this camp classic.

Spanning the full emotional spectrum, Springsteen moves into more elegiac mode as the show unfolds. During an extended *My City Of Ruins*,

a smouldering ballad with strong echoes of Curtis Mayfield's *People Get Ready*, he introduces the E Street Band members while paying warm tribute to two co-founders who died young: Clarence Clemons and Danny Federici. The presence of Clarence's nephew Jake Clemons on sax adds unavoidable extra poignancy here. Staying in solemn mood, *Last Man Standing* also pays tribute to George Thies, the singer with Springsteen's teenage band The Castiles, who died of lung cancer in 2018.

Rounding off three hours of chest-thumping, sky-punching, roof-raising rock'n'soul bombast, Springsteen ends on a mournful note with a spine-tingling solo strum through *I'll See You In My Dreams*. Here he channels two Dylans - Bob and local Welsh hero Thomas - with his plaintive harmonica honk and shaky promise that '*death is not the end*'. Raging softly against the dying of the light, he assures us that the underlying message is life-affirming, even if the croaky tremble in his voice tells a different story.

Stephen Dalton



New Model Army

Southampton The 1865

Righteous fury you can dance to.

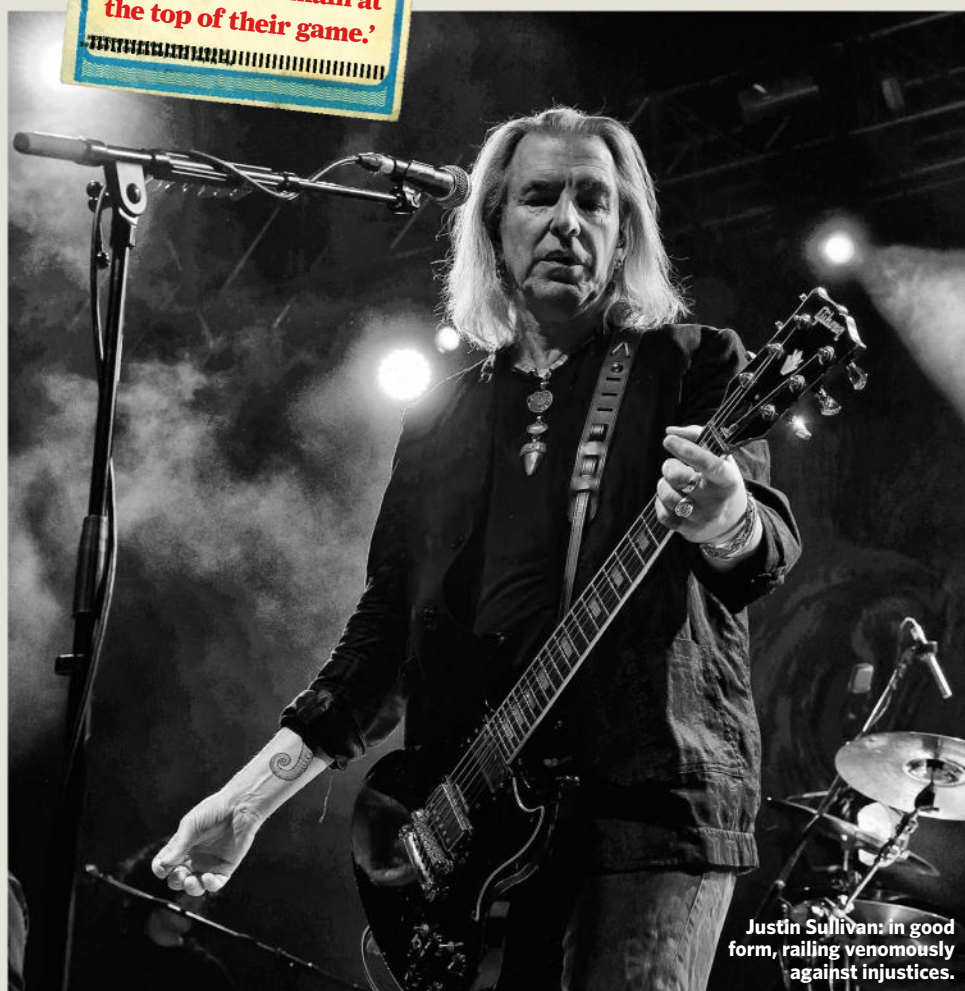
★ Consummate road warriors to a man, you absolutely know what you are going to get with a New Model Army gig: intensity, power, and a sheer, visceral connection with the songs; you don't just listen to NMA tunes, you feel them.

And so it is with the already great-sounding songs from new album *Unbroken*, now fully road-tested across Europe and honed to thunderous perfection. *Coming Or Going* is a blazing opener, setting the scene for *First Summer After*, *Language* and *If I Am Still Me*, punctuated by older songs *Long Goodbye* and *Winter*, with main man Justin Sullivan in good form and quipping that the latter is probably the last thing we want to hear, given how unseasonably freezing the weather is outside.

Altogether a perhaps overgenerous eight new songs are played, and we're halfway through the set before the place erupts properly and the traditional human pyramids start popping up to a brilliantly driven 225 and majestic *Green And Grey* from the Army's classic *Thunder And Consolation* album. A second highlight arrives shortly after in the swift one-two of *Reload* and *Angry Planet*, Sullivan railing venomously against multiple injustices, and the mood is carried through to an audience-pleasing encore of 1984, *Poison Street* and a fiery *Get Me Out*.

Still relevant, still angry, New Model Army remain at the top of their game.

Essi Berelian



Justin Sullivan: in good form, railing venomously against injustices.

Roadburn Festival 2024

Tilburg, Netherlands

The good, the bad and the weird from Netherlands' premier alt. music fest.

★ In the 25 years since its inception, Roadburn has evolved from stoner/doom haven to an alt. music mecca, with specially commissioned sets and album-in-full play-throughs offering an entirely unique festival experience. That does come at a cost, however. While transgressive acts like **Chelsea Wolfe** thrive, her genre-blurring 16-song set met with a sense of reverence, more mainstream acts wither on the vine. **Royal Thunder** enjoy some success with their first set, a stoner-friendly blues jam, but a late-night rendition of latest album *Rebuilding The Mountain* pulls a sparse audience and the band's performance comes off as listless.

Thankfully there are triumphs over the weekend. Dutch doom progressives **Dool** deliver an emotional gut-punch tinged with beautiful fragility with *The Shape Of Fluidity*, and **The Keening** devastate and enthrall as they slip venomous invectives amid their elegiac, gothic chamber doom.

Another victim of Roadburn's shift away from more mainstream sounds the **Jesus And Mary Chain** play to a half-full Main Stage. A lethargic start gives way to alt.rock victory, however, the likes of *Sidewalking* and *Blues From A Gun* undeniable in their serpentine grooves, their neo-psychedelic jams a reminder that dancefloors are for more than just reverent gawping.

Rich Hobson

The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown

Preston The Continental

Shamanic majesty: 60s icon still on fire.

★ Rock's true originals rarely get the credit they deserve. Few, however, have lit up the pop firmament as spectacularly as Arthur Brown. A trailblazing influence on every 'shock rock' icon from Alice Cooper to Kiss to Marilyn Manson, even at a sprightly 81 his creative flame burns as brightly as ever.

Tonight a Continental heaving with fans of all ages is treated to a master class in both set dynamics and vocal delivery. Ably supported by his band decked out as demonic Morris dancers, Brown is a mesmeric presence. A choral opening is the entry point into a set where material from his 1968 debut (*Nightmare*) and 1972's *Kingdom Come (Sunrise)* is interspersed with choice cuts from 2022's superlative comeback, his multi-octave range veering from booming baritone to horror-flick screams, all accompanied by multiple costume changes and retina-frazzling projections.

The recurring visual images of flickering flames are brought to life with – yes – the flaming headdress for *Fire*, but it's the moving encore rendition of *Long Long Road* that will live just as long in the memory. An extended encore mash-up of standards *Keep A-Knockin'* and *Lucille*, meanwhile, reminds us that underneath the greasepaint and glitter he's still a rock'n'roller at heart.

A national treasure.

Paul Moody

Orange Goblin

Wellington Valhalla, New Zealand

Orange Goblin finally make it to the world's most southerly capital city.

★ Tucked down a side street, a short walk from the Bucket Fountain (one of the southern hemisphere's premier tourist attractions, honest) lies Valhalla, Wellington's equally premiere metal bar. A giant skeletal hand is suspended from the ceiling. A helmet from a suit of armour sits next to the DJ booth, its shining steel embellished with deer antlers. The toilet appears to have been hit by a tornado. And on stage are Orange Goblin.

It's taken Ben Ward and co. 30 years to get to this part of the world, although the stage is so low – and Ward so tall – that the other band members are visible only momentarily throughout the set. This means that Ward is the focus of attention throughout, and he revels in the spotlight, pumping his fists with abandon and generally behaving as if it's the best night of his life.

Perhaps it is, because Orange Goblin are mighty, from the opening *Solarisphere* to the exultant climax of *Red Tide Rising*. *Renegade* is dedicated to Lemmy ("We miss him every day of our lives," says Ward), and *The Devil's Whip* races so hard it may actually have belched smoke. Even what Ward describes as "the most badly timed stage dive I've ever seen" fails to dampen the mood of celebration.

At the end, he tosses his wristbands into the audience in triumph, like Andre Agassi.

Fraser Lewry

The Hives

Dublin Olympia Theatre

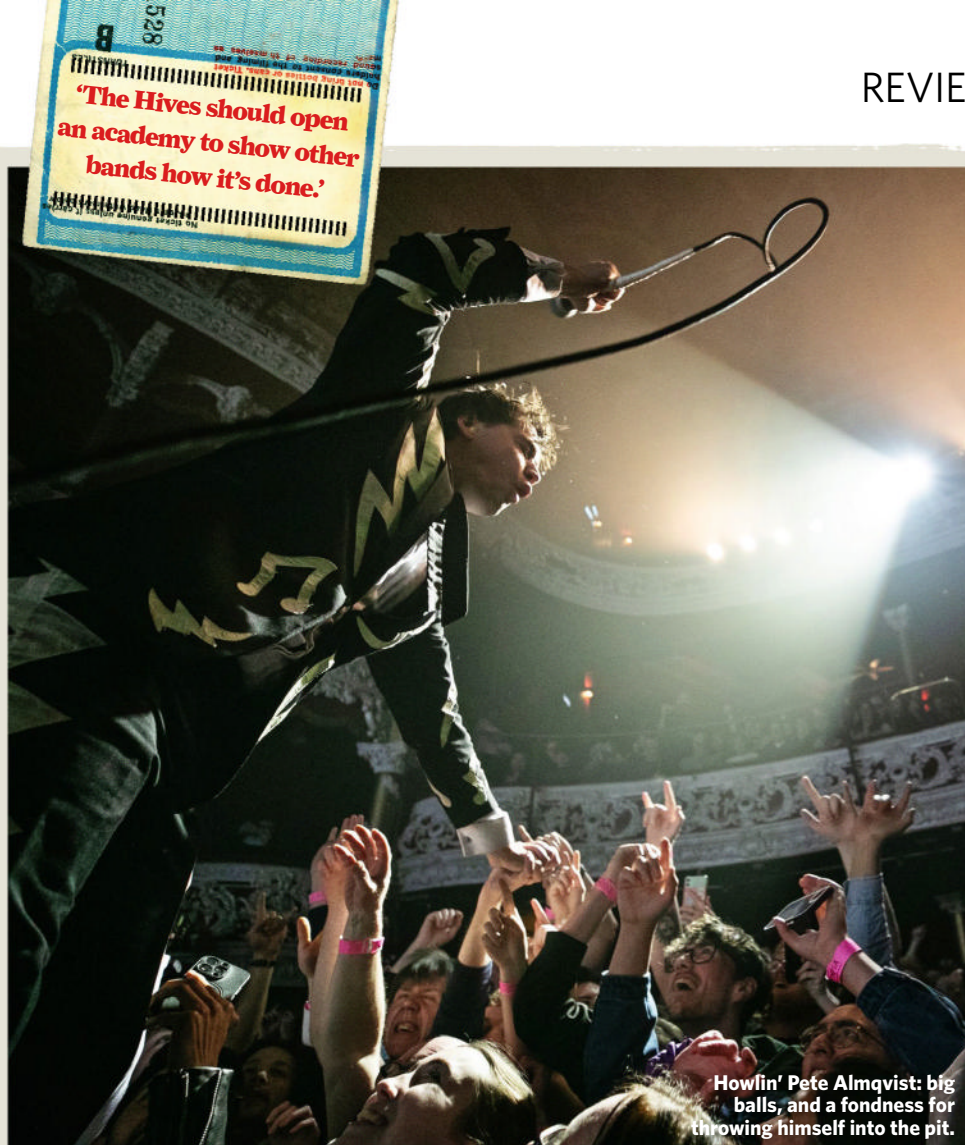
Scratching that itch.

★ Walking on stage to the strains of Chopin's *Funeral March* and repeatedly claiming you are "the greatest in the world at whatever it is we do" requires balls the size of Elgin Marbles, but The Hives brook no doubt. Despite his dodgy references to leprechauns, Howlin' Pete Almqvist is to frontmanism what Sir Walter Raleigh was to defeating Spaniards. His acumen is matched by the heroes around him on stage, especially brother Nicholaus Arson on guitar who battles for attention like a spoilt child. For both men the stage parameters are more suggestion than rule as they throw themselves repeatedly into the frenzied pit.

Dressed in matching suits, adorned with lightning slashes that – of course – glow in the dark, The Hives really should consider opening a new Swedish Academy to show other bands how it's done. Listening to *Main Offender*, *Walk Idiot Walk* and *Hate To Say I Told You So* is like having your head smashed through a pane of glass repeatedly, but in a good way. *Go Right Ahead* sounds like AC/DC on speed so potent that Lemmy would have balked, and furious deliveries of songs from the recent *The Death Of Randy Fitzsimmons* are driven by riffs so hard and lean, you'd surrender your wallet to them in a dark alley without question.

They finish the set with an appropriately incendiary *Tick Tick Boom*, because The Hives are rock'n'roll dynamite.

Pat Carty



Howlin' Pete Almqvist: big balls, and a fondness for throwing himself into the pit.

Lenny Kaye And Friends

London 100 Club

The original artyfacts from the first psychedelic era are brought vividly back to life.

★ When musician, writer and producer Lenny Kaye assembled the *Nuggets* compilation album in 1972, not only was the genre of garage rock revived, but he also inadvertently kick-started the next generation of three-chord wonders, many of whom perform tonight. Revolving around Kaye's core band of singer-guitarist Jim Jones (Jim Jones All Stars), drummers Rat Scabies (The Damned) and Marty Love (Johnny Moped), Sham 69 bassist Dave Tregunna and keyboard player Greg Rice, this gloriously chaotic set evokes a bygone era with some 30 songs delivered in just over two hours.

With guest performers including Gang Of Four's Jon King (*Woolly Bully*) and Doctor And The Medics' Clive Jackson (*Strychnine*), rock'n'roll evangelist Jim Jones marshals the band to prevent the whole shebang from derailing. Right from the shimmering opener of The Electric Prunes' *I Had Too Much To Dream (Last Night)*, 77-year-old Kaye is having a ball, especially when he widens the musical brief and goes topless crowd surfing during The Stooges' *I Wanna Be Your Dog*. The Godfathers' Peter Coyne is closer to home with The Creation's *How Does It Feel To Feel?*. A rousing reading of Them's *Gloria* closes the evening, the stage threatening to collapse under the weight of guests and ramalama. Which is as it should be.

Julian Marszalek

Sunn O)))

Bexhill-on-Sea De La Warr Pavilion

Come on feel the noise.

★ Belief is all. There are no songs as such, just occasional modulations in tone or volume, the seismic vibration of the floor and fittings. There are no vocals or brass interludes or anything so trivial as structure to divert the audience's attention away from the low rumblings emanating from the two hooded figures on stage – two figures mostly obscured from view for most of the 90 minutes of this untrammelled performance by clouds and clouds of billowing smoke, mega-lighting rigs creating basic yet hypnotic trance states.

Oh, man. This is as far from commercial as 'music' gets, heavier in its own disturbed luminescence than Hawkwind, monstrous in its sweep and monolithic splendour. Primordial. Primitive. Bodies in the audience are rooted to the spot, arms extended, fists clenched, determined not to miss one bit of noise. It's not noise, though. It goes way deeper than that. A soundscape Stonehenge on a colossal scale of subjection and subterfuge.

The sound sometimes crescendos. At other times it leaves the audience staring into the face of oblivion.

Did Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson play just one song? Did they play a hundred? Is this the purest form rock music can take? A cult? (Yes.)

I last 46 minutes before retiring to the balcony, where the noise is, impossibly, even louder.

You have to believe.

Everett True

Robert Plant Presents Saving Grace

Peterborough New Theatre

Plant-based collective brings silver and gold.

★ For a bona fide rock legend, Robert Plant exudes a surprising amount of earthy bonhomie, greeting the cagoule-wearing front rows with a cheery "Good evening and welcome to Gardeners' Question Time!" And what an evening it turns out to be.

On this latest string of dates, Saving Grace have honed their Anglo-Americana repertoire to perfection. The five-piece fronted by Plant and Suzi Dian interpret folk and blues songs, traditional and contemporary. The effect of the whole shebang in an intimate setting is hypnotic. Throw in a quartet of Led Zeppelin numbers, including *Four Sticks* (believed to be its first airing since 1971) and it's dynamite. Among the highlights are an exquisite *Rain Song*, Dian's shimmering vocal on *It Don't Bother Me and Is That You*, a majestic gospelly blues sung by guitarist Matt Worley, peppered with blasts of Plant's harmonica. The cherry atop the lot is *Gallows Pole*, the finale given an extra shot of magic with an excerpt of *In My Time Of Dying*.

The past hasn't been denied, but refreshed by an old master with a new breed of musicians. Plant heralded this tour by posting a hand-drawn flyer for his '64 blueswailers Blacksnake Moan, boasting the "weirdest, wildest sound". Sixty years on, it still stands.

Claudia Elliott



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Ministry linchpin
Al Jourgensen
on the records,
artists and gigs
that are of lasting
significance
to him.

Interview: Rob Hughes



“Tom Waits proved that you don’t need a great voice to be a good storyteller.”

“I turned sixty-five last year and decided to finally become a fucking adult,” Al Jourgensen says, laughing. “So I took out all my dreads and my piercings, all that shit. Now it’s just my natural hair and whatever else I got left.”

Jourgensen may have dialled down his distinctive look, but his music as leader of industrial-rock brutalists Ministry is just as uncompromising as ever. Their latest album is the socio-political *HOPIUMFORTHETHEMASSES*.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

The first song I was cognisant of was the Rolling Stones’ 19th *Nervous Breakdown*. Compared to The Beatles or The Monkees, the Stones were rough around the edges. Then you’d read about their maniac lifestyle and drug arrests, so I naturally gravitated towards that.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

Probably (*Don’t Fear*) *The Reaper*. It was 1977, and I joined a covers band on guitar during my senior high school freshman year at college in Colorado. We were called Slayer. Seriously. I had a good laugh about that with Tom [Araya] years later.

THE GUITAR HERO

I went to see Robin Trower recently, and got to meet him backstage. And I realised how much *Bridge Of Sighs* meant to my development, in all ways, shapes and forms. I couldn’t believe he knew my stuff too. I was like: “Whoa!”

THE SONGWRITER

I’ve always wanted to meet Colin Newman [Wire]. I especially love the way he accentuates esoteric points while making it very clear what he’s trying to say. I try to emulate that with my songwriting. He’s the bee’s knees, man.

THE SINGER

Tom Waits proved that you don’t need a great voice to be a good storyteller. I always wanted to be the guitar player, I never wanted to be a singer. He helped me make it through that transition to Ministry frontman, not being self-conscious that you can’t sing worth a fuck.

MY CULT HERO

We once toured with The Mentors, an eighties punk band based in California. GG Allin was nothing compared to [singer/drummer] El Duce. And I know because I beat the shit out of GG Allin in an elevator in New York for throwing up all over me.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I’ll tell you, I’m a closet Cher fan. It started when I was eight. I just thought she was the hottest woman in the

world. And all her songs are so damn catchy. I’m just a sucker for stuff like *Believe*.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

Wire’s *Pink Flag* just blew me away. It’s a punk rock warrior record, but they were already starting to sound like early Syd Barrett at times. That and the first Killing Joke album [self-titled] really focused my direction on where I wanted to be.

FAVOURITE LIVE ALBUM

Nothing beats Humble Pie’s *Rockin’ The Fillmore*. That’s the seventies rock record. There’s also *FM/Live* by Climax Blues Band.

THE BEST RECORD I’VE MADE

I think Ministry made incremental gains between *Moral Hygiene* [2021] and *HOPIUMFORTHETHEMASSES*. Then there’s this film score I just did [*Long Knife*], and the next thing is a Ministry album with [ex-member] Paul Barker. I’m not being evasive, it’s just that my best stuff hasn’t been written yet.

THE WORST RECORD I’VE MADE

I find flaws in all of my records. But the situation around *With Sympathy* [1983 debut] was bad, with [label boss] Clive Davis interfering, appointing producers and backing musicians, telling me where I could go, making me cut my fucking hair. They signed me because I was unique, then they tried to make me a eunuch. In that sense, personally, it’s the worst album in the history of mankind.

THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND EVER

I saw Laika & The Cosmonauts at the first or second South By Southwest, and they were so good I asked them to open for Ministry. During the off season they’re reindeer herders, then they rehearse for the whole winter, playing 1950s surf tunes. They live way the hell out in the Arctic Circle.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Some of the old country stuff draws out emotions, like *Crying Time*.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY SONG

If it’s Saturday night and I’m pretty drunk, and somebody puts on Buck Satan’s *The Only Time I’m Sober Is When You’re Gone*, or *Just Got Paid* by ZZ Top, either of those will probably get me into trouble. That’ll trigger my rowdy side from thirty or forty years ago.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Tom Waits’s *The Piano Has Been Drinking* is humorous. Because whatever people might think of me on my deathbed – there’s been good and bad – I can just blame it on the piano. I just love it. For once I’m not taking accountability! 🍷

HOPIUMFORTHETHEMASSES is out now via Nuclear Blast.



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